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*Political Dynamics
and Security in the
Arabian Peninsula
Through the 1990s*

Joseph A. Kechichian



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Project AIR FORCE
Arroyo Center

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Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

PREFACE

This report identifies and analyzes the political dynamics of the Arabian Peninsula in the 1990s in the aftermath of the 1991 war with Iraq. It examines the current status of Iraq and the six conservative Arab Gulf monarchies (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) and highlights points of vulnerability in each state that could lead to future instability affecting the Gulf region. Other regional papers developed in this project will assess Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and the new, predominantly Muslim countries of Azerbaijan and Central Asia.

The overall project objective is to provide a political-military assessment of security prospects in the Gulf region over the next several years, the challenges the U.S. military is likely to encounter as it supports U.S. national objectives in the region, and the implications for future U.S. security planning.

This report should interest regional analysts, contingency planners, and policymakers.

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SUMMARY

More than a year and a half after the end of the War for Kuwait, the political landscape of the Arab world remained scarred by most of the same problems and tensions that plagued it before Saddam Hussein's invasion of the shaykhdom. The war, moreover, accelerated the disarray of the Arab world into more disunity and uncertainty. At least two camps have now emerged: a group of aspiring nonautocratic "states," and those holding to traditional, "established" political values. Jordan, Algeria, Yemen, and, to lesser degrees, Lebanon, Tunisia, Mauritania, Morocco, and the Palestinians, adopted antitraditional policies that further separated them from the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies. The latter, along with Egypt and Syria, amalgamated their efforts to preserve traditional, even conformist, interests. To meet the new challenges associated with this political fragmentation, conservative Arab Gulf monarchies are adopting more assertive policies, aimed at shaping the course of their histories rather than allowing the priorities of "pan-Arabism" to shape them. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states' newly discovered assertiveness is driven more by necessity than design. This subtle but fundamental change needs clarification if we are to better ascertain the direction of change and identify emerging trends in the region. At the same time, absent a clear understanding of the political dynamics of the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies in the postwar period, the task of protecting and promoting U.S. security interests in the area will be much more difficult.

THE EVOLVING GULF REGION

A year and a half after the end of Operation Desert Storm, four major developments can be identified in the Persian Gulf region:

- First, Baathist Iraq is reestablishing its authority and slowly but surely rebuilding its ties to the Arab world;
- Second, Saudi Arabia is undergoing a political and military awakening;
- Third, but to varying degrees, the smaller Gulf shaykhdoms are facing certain intractable internal dilemmas; and
- Fourth, internal pressures throughout the region are challenging ruling establishments to introduce genuine political reforms.

BAATHIST IRAQ REESTABLISHING ITS AUTHORITY

By invading Kuwait, Saddam Hussein terrified the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies, displaced millions of workers, spread havoc in the oil industry, inflicted grievous environmental harm, suspended payments of his estimated \$80 billion in debts and, for a brief period of time, held several thousand hostages from dozens of countries. The Baathi leader set out to change the Middle East for good and, in all probability, set far-reaching change in motion. Baghdad's actions were brutal to the Iraqi people as well, with the full repercussions of the war there still unclear.

Given the nature of the Baathi regime in Iraq, promises of internal democratization remain no more than a chimera. Still, they were necessary for the survival of a regime that had traditionally relied on a carrot and stick approach to maintaining internal control and suppressing dissent. In the absence of any meaningful economic carrots (for as long as U.N. sanctions remain in place), some measure of wider political participation was a necessary element of the state's co-option formula. The bloody suppression of the Shia revolt, however, served as ample warning to the population that the regime was willing and able to unleash its forces again if the "democratization" process went too far. A series of cabinet reshuffles followed, with the life expectancy of technocratic ministers shortening as economic and social problems remained unsolved. Political repression was main-

tained and an anticorruption campaign initiated, while access to foreign currency was used as a powerful inducement for the private sector to continue supporting the regime. Throughout the remainder of 1991 and 1992, Saddam Hussein solidified his powerbase by repressing potential sources of opposition and taking other steps that would ensure his hold on power.

Baghdad moved diligently on other fronts as well to restore its pre-eminence in the Arab world. In redirecting its orientation, Iraq sought to check a resurgent Iran, thereby placing the GCC states in a quandary. GCC states faced a dilemma of withstanding the political repercussions associated with an Iraqi-initiated anti-Iranian effort as long as relations between Riyadh and Teheran remained sour. The smaller Gulf shaykhdoms proved wary of jumping on this "Arab" bandwagon, striving instead to heal the Saudi-Iranian rift.

Saddam Hussein, nevertheless, intended to restore Iraq as a vital actor in the Persian Gulf region. At least in the short term, this enabled GCC rulers to support Saudi Arabia's emerging leadership position.

THE SAUDI AWAKENING: ASSERTIVENESS IN FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

Arab nationalists argued that the West won the war but not the peace. This also held true for Saudi Arabia. In joining Western forces so wholeheartedly against Saddam Hussein, the kingdom strayed far from its tradition of consensus diplomacy and consensus politics. Saudi leaders determined that they could no longer live in a state of permanent tension with their northern neighbor, especially when the latter was so strongly opposed to closer association between the monarchies and Western powers.

Still, time was not on Riyadh's side because larger tensions loomed. King Fahd and the Saudi government emphasized the criminal nature of Saddam Hussein's actions, both in Kuwait and towards the Iraqi people. But this message was hard to sell to many in the Arab world, coming as it did from leaders who displayed little inclination to reform their own political systems. Equally, there was no doubt that the war and its aftermath created serious challenges to the legit-

imacy of the House of Saud, highlighting Riyadh's isolation within the Arab world.

Steering Between Western Modernism and Islamic Fundamentalism

By mid-1991, an element of political uncertainty was apparent in the kingdom. Riyadh was attempting to steer a difficult course between Western modernism and Islamic fundamentalism. The kingdom invited several Western powers to help defend it at the same time as it was reestablishing cordial relations with Iran, where Islamic values seemed certain to persist.

Domestically, divergent social trends crystallized even more. The problem for the government was that the middle ground, charted so carefully by King Faisal in the early 1960s, was becoming harder to maintain. The number of young Saudis trained in the West in modern management techniques had reached the tens of thousands rather than the hundreds; the number of contemporary economic units also grew exponentially. These developments have encouraged a more powerful pull towards modernism which cannot be ignored if the government is indeed sincere about building a diversified economy. On the conservative side, it appeared that the fundamentalist appeal was reaching the armed forces. To be sure, fundamentalists and liberals were demanding greater political representation from an increasingly defensive ruling family.

The Kingdom's Quest for Control of Its Destiny

The kingdom's foreign policy strategies were also disturbed by the war and by the fact that Saddam Hussein remained in power in early 1992. For Riyadh, the reestablishment of ties with Iran passed the 1991 pilgrimage test as no disturbances were recorded. A new regional order was emerging and the Saudis were in fact using the GCC effectively to deflect attention from their own vulnerabilities on sensitive postwar issues. Nevertheless, security remained the key issue for the kingdom, with the Saudis feeling threatened along several of their borders. The uncertain situation in the Arab world did not readily lend itself to diplomatic solutions.

Substantial past defense expenditures—mostly in the form of infrastructure—paid off as the kingdom successfully hosted over 600,000 foreign troops in 1990–91. Yet, Riyadh also acknowledged that its security was ensured by non-Saudis. To remedy what it perceived as a “limitation” in its capabilities, the kingdom embarked on a renewed campaign of military expansion. Saudi officials stressed the need to acquire high-tech systems, including additional F-15 fighters, to make up for their manpower shortages. Uncharacteristically, however, they also depicted the kingdom as the principal guarantor of regional security. The latter objective was articulated to warn GCC states rushing to sign bilateral defense agreements with the United States, Britain, and France. In early 1992, the kingdom’s assertiveness towards the shaykhdoms became even sharper. Dormant border disputes were rekindled and Oman’s reconciliation efforts with Yemen rebuffed. In the Yemen case, oil companies prospecting in the border region were instructed to stop all work. Likewise, Bahrain and Qatar were sharply ostracized for revisiting, yet once again, the Hawar Islands dispute even as Riyadh’s own border clash with Doha was stifled. Skepticism was also voiced over Kuwait’s upcoming parliamentary elections. The sum total of these pronouncements indicated that the Saudi leadership was moving towards a new level of political assertiveness.

The Ruling Family's Response to Rising Internal Demands

Concerned that ruling family members were seen as attaching more importance to their own personal security than to the stability and integrity of the country itself, King Fahd and senior family members chose to embark on the most sweeping changes recorded in Saudi Arabia's history. King Fahd's February 1992 announcement that a majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council) would be formed temporarily defused the prowess of the opposition. No longer was the issue “when” will King Fahd initiate political reforms but “what” role the population, both secular and religious, would play within them. King Fahd made his long-awaited announcement because Saudis finally emerged from the shock of the war and started asking themselves why it was allowed to happen in the first place and what could be done to prevent it from happening again. A mood of impatience and, at times, powerlessness affected both government and the population at large, requiring a fortuitous coincidence of helpful

international political and economic developments to ensure an un-ruffled passage through a period that the Saudi ruling family hoped to pass unscathed. The constituency courted by the fundamentalists was precisely the stratum of lower-middle-class Saudis so assiduously co-opted by Riyadh through policies of subsidies, cheap loans, and land transfers.

DILEMMAS IN THE SHAYKHDOMS

Repercussions of the War

The War for Kuwait introduced noticeable changes throughout the region and, to varying degrees, affected all of the shaykhdoms. It dramatically illustrated vulnerabilities and, because of long-term needs to preserve existing political systems, highlighted dependencies on outside forces for security. Inasmuch as the shaykhdoms shared common vulnerabilities and dependencies, they also shared distinguishing differences in the ways they responded to regional and internal developments.

Despite its support of the GCC effort, for example, the Sultanate of Oman pressed for a diplomatic settlement of the conflict. Muscat was also active within the GCC, working towards a rapprochement with Iran. Moreover, Oman was sympathetic to Yemen throughout the crisis, seeking to avert instability in the southern peninsula. These initiatives identified the sultanate as a progressive diplomatic player in the region. Increasingly influential in the GCC, Oman avoided the trauma of insecurity and Saddamophobia sweeping the other conservative Arab Gulf monarchies. On the domestic front, the Omani government pushed ahead with its plans to create an assembly of wilayat (provinces) representatives, in a bid to give regional interests some measure of political participation.

The situation was far less clear in Bahrain. The government was under no illusions about the challenge in maintaining social cohesion on the islands, as popular sentiments shifted against the al-Khalifah and, during the war, against allied forces. On the other hand, because the ruling family lived through the Iran-Iraq War knowing that a majority of Bahrainis supported Iran, they may have felt that they could also ride out any future storm. Manama's control over the

levers of economic activity seemed fairly secure. But the government's involvement on what was perceived by a majority of Bahrainis as the "wrong side" was more pronounced during the War for Kuwait. Consequently, the war exacerbated tensions between locals and Western expatriates. Over the longer term, the government faces problems arising from growing socioeconomic contradictions and potential Saudi irredentism.

Qatar moved more decisively than other GCC states towards rejuvenating its ministerial line-up, expanding popular consultation, and directing private sector investment into vital infrastructure projects. Nevertheless, postwar problems emerged at the domestic political, diplomatic, and economic levels. The al-Thani government juggled its national objectives and concerns with those of its fellow GCC members—particularly with regard to relations with Iran. On this score, Doha agreed with both Muscat and Abu Dhabi, and adopted assertive policies aimed at encouraging rapprochement. However, the government appreciated its vulnerability outside a strengthened regional grouping, and looked at Kuwait as the example of what can happen to a small state that attempts to "go it alone."

Relations among the individual shaykhdoms in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) improved as GCC states developed links with Iran while maintaining close ties with the West. Abu Dhabi pressed for the adoption of a GCC defense strategy, briefly known as the GCC+1 model, in which Iran would play an important role. The BCCI (Bank of Credit and Commerce International) crisis, however, severely strained Abu Dhabi's credibility in the international arena, and with the bank's huge anticipated losses, reflected poorly on the shaykhdom itself. It was also feared that the BCCI scandal might spur domestic dissent. Yet, the more likely outcome was for the al-Nahayyan to receive strong internal and regional support, regardless of private misgivings.

Finally, the Kuwaiti ruling family successfully headed off demands for increased democratization by providing financial benefits to its "citizens" and persecuting Palestinians still living in the shaykhdom. But the old policy of co-opting Kuwaitis with financial inducements required far larger sums than were spent in the past; the needs were far greater and the appetite more pronounced. In the aftermath of the war, demands for direct compensation increased, along with re-

quests for grants, soft loans, and government guarantees to restart businesses and reestablish lines of credit. Kuwait's leaders were quick to respond to these demands because the al-Sabah were well aware of the need to restart the country's war-damaged economy. Ironically, this implied that the "democratic" opposition faced an uphill battle in convincing voters that the al-Sabahs had to go.

The Challenge of the Saudi Awakening

At the conclusion of the War for Kuwait, and witnessing the dramatic Saudi awakening, the smaller shaykhdoms feared Riyadh most, because they realized that the kingdom's growing potency could usher into their region a Pax Saudica. Irrespective of their own internal dynamics, the shaykhdoms anticipated dramatic changes in their external environment. As noted above, uncertainties loomed over the horizon for much of the area, as Iraq reasserted itself, Iran rebuilt its military, and Saudi Arabia adopted much more assertive policies. These uncertainties promise many surprises which, in turn, may well affect Western and regional energy security. Given the disarray within the larger Arab world, tensions among the Gulf states and between the Gulf and Levant states will rise. GCC states, led by Saudi Arabia, will gear up to defend themselves from the repercussions of such renewed military conflict. In fact, defense against perceived "foreign intrusions" in the region's security will translate into fresh confrontations involving the GCC states and other regional states, including Iraq, Iran, and Yemen.

Increasing Demands and Limits for Internal Reforms

Genuine internal political reforms may indeed have been introduced throughout the GCC states but the ruling regimes' main concern was with internal security. The search for effective internal security was heightened after the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and its ensuing liberation. With the Palestinian community cut in size regionwide, GCC internal security apparatuses will probably focus on their other domestic scapegoats, with the obvious targets being democratic opposition groups. Shia communities were also vulnerable, although the rapprochement with Teheran may limit the extent to which GCC authorities will go after their own indigenous Shia populations.

Moreover, there was the coincidence of interests between GCC governments and Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's "moderate" regime to undercut radical Shia factions wherever they were.

Nevertheless, there is a clear risk that internal tensions involving disenfranchised and conservative elements within the GCC states may galvanize the opposition against the establishment. Thus, the future direction of the region could solidify conservative Arab Gulf rulers' resolve, which, in turn, will require military responses against perceived threats. As Washington's allies throughout the area confront their opponents, the resulting confrontations will compel the United States to make difficult political and military choices, with wide-ranging implications.

MOUNTING INTERNAL CONSTRAINTS THROUGHOUT THE REGION

By far the most important area of change throughout the GCC states concerns the domestic arena. With the introduction of some political reforms through the creation of majlis al-shuras (consultative councils), Saudi Arabia and the five smaller shaykhdoms are widening their decisionmaking structures. Key political reforms are also more common. King Fahd, for example, ensured that the crucial succession question was somewhat institutionalized in early 1992 when he decreed the establishment of the council and streamlined several heretofore "traditional" policies. His aim was to limit future internal family disputes. In Kuwait, the al-Sabah government held to its October 1992 parliamentary elections. Elsewhere, demands on the ruling elites also increased, with calls for more political participation. Yet, despite all of the positive steps taken in the aftermath of the War for Kuwait, it is quite unlikely that there will be any dramatic change in terms of efforts to "democratize" the GCC political arena. Islam will continue to be the ultimate model in providing guidance on appropriate and acceptable decisions. In the Saudi case, for example, Islam successfully transferred loyalties from the parochial tribal unit to the state, and provided a basic element of trust among members of the Saudi polity. The al-Saud will therefore preserve Islam as the country's salient legitimizing factor. This approach was likely to be emulated throughout all six GCC states. A resurgence of

Islamic values, however, may reveal a double-edged sword. If this resurgence is combined with economic prosperity, then the stability of GCC ruling regimes will likely be enhanced. On the other hand, if economic prosperity dwindles, then opposition forces throughout the GCC countries may well gather momentum and challenge the ruling leaderships.

U.S.-GCC TIES SOLIDIFYING, BUT DIVISIVE AREAS REMAIN

The rapidly evolving U.S.-GCC relationships have entered an era that incorporates new political, strategic, and economic realities. Politically, the War for Kuwait and the lack of a common orientation among Arabs required GCC states to assert a level of independent leadership and, simultaneously, devote a great deal of attention to Western sensitivities. Riyadh led this solidifying effort but all GCC states supported the kingdom's broad objectives. This was best illustrated in the active role played by the GCC states at the October 1991 Madrid Arab-Israeli Peace Conference. Moreover, a redefinition of the strategic equation is under way as GCC states sign bilateral security agreements with their Western allies. Finally, GCC states also recognize that close relations with oil-importing countries is in their common interests.

For these reasons, the political-military rapprochement between the GCC states and the United States should continue to grow for the foreseeable future. But growing internal dissatisfaction in the GCC states could also fuel anti-American sentiments. Popular anti-Americanism will complicate the GCC regimes' close associations with Washington, especially since their dependence on American assistance will remain unabated for the balance of the century.

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Chapter One
INTRODUCTION

A year and a half after the end of the War for Kuwait, the political landscape of the Middle East remains scarred by the same problems and tensions that plagued it before 27 February 1991. The war highlighted the region's underlying problems without solving them. But it also unleashed political forces that polarized the Arab world. States that relied on wealth, which included the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies along with Egypt and Syria, drew together. Poorer and increasingly freer states, such as Jordan, Algeria, Yemen, and to lesser degrees, Lebanon, Tunisia, Mauritania, Morocco, and the Palestinians, moved closer together. Under the pressure of home-grown Islamists, the latter's leaders also started long-awaited reform programs.

Political reforms were also introduced in the Persian Gulf region, notably through the introduction of a democracy movement in Kuwait and the creation of majlis al-shuras (consultative councils) in Oman and Saudi Arabia. The democracy movement in Kuwait, which comprised Islamic, pan-Arab, and nonideological, pragmatic groups, sought political power to match its material wealth. The movement's constituency was enlarged by the delaying mechanisms favored at Bayan Palace. In Oman, the introduction of a semi-elected consultative council was a telling harbinger of the inevitability of democratization in the sultanate. Muscat, somewhat wealthy but with ambitious development plans, was nevertheless clinging to its identity and dignity, conscious that material wealth alone would not satisfy its people. Finally, in Saudi Arabia, King Fahd decreed the establishment of a 61-member majlis al-shura aimed at restoring the government's authority at the grass-roots level. By all accounts, Kuwaiti,

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Omani, and Saudi officials responded to popular demands for effective participation, well aware of the need to placate the wishes of millions of their citizens. Even Iran and Iraq appeared to be moving in that direction.

Because the six conservative Arab Gulf rulers cooperated closely with the Western-led coalition deployed on the Arabian Peninsula in 1990 (see Figure 1.1), they assumed clear risks of alienation within the Arab world. Although no anti-GCC or anti-Western actions emerged in the wake of the war, it seems likely that, in the longer term, GCC rulers will face serious challenges to their authority. The period following the 1967 Middle East war may be instructive in this regard: After the six-day war, little or no action by revolutionary forces was recorded for several years. After a few years, however, the world entered into the plane hijacking cycle which remained active throughout the 1970s. Although no parallel to such developments may be forthcoming in the Gulf region, it behooves policymakers to consider whether pro-Western Arab Gulf rulers may not be in jeopardy unless they actively participate in ending the disarray of the Arab world.

At issue is the legitimacy of the ruling families. While the Palestinian cause remained a vital legitimizing factor during the war, support for Palestinians among GCC leaders diminished drastically during 1991 and 1992. Indeed, Palestinians were deported en masse not only from Kuwait, but also from the other GCC states. This hardening of Arab Gulf leaders' positions towards the core unifying issue of the Arab world was difficult. It created new dilemmas for leaders seasoned in avoiding permanent commitments. In fact, their changing perceptions stood in direct contrast to views held by an awakened public opinion, whose support for the Palestinian cause never waned. Editorial writers up and down the Gulf, including in Kuwait, reminded their readers that the Palestinian cause, as an ideal Arab cause, was still valid and worthy of their support. In the short term, however, distrust between GCC ruling elites and the Palestinian leaderships prevented a rapid reconciliation.

GCC leaders were fairly confident that their Western allies would provide vital assistance whenever the need arose, as the War for Kuwait demonstrated. Their confidence was based on the knowl-



Figure 1.1—The Arabian Peninsula

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edge that Western countries would not allow the area's precious resources to fall under the control of an "untrustworthy" leader. It was this knowledge, in part, that persuaded them to adopt very assertive policies towards Iraq. With a defeated but still quite potent Iraq, and an increasingly powerful Iran, GCC states chose to strengthen their limited military capabilities and, more important, acknowledged the need to introduce domestic political reforms. The al-Saud, al-Khalifah, al-Thani, al-Nahayyan, and al-Bu Said ruling families did not want to be in the same position that the al-Sabah were in August 1990. In meeting future threats, especially of the domestic variety, GCC rulers had to ensure that Western powers considered their hold on power to be a shared interest.

Ironically, in the aftermath of the War for Kuwait, no member of the international community was anxious to see Iraq split apart. Iran, for example, was adamant in its opposition to any changes in Iraq's geographical make-up, even though Teheran longed to replace Saddam Hussein's Baath government with an Islamic regime. Turkey was also opposed to the independence movement among Iraqi Kurds, fearing that its own Kurdish population might rise against Ankara. Syria, which insisted that a united front against Israel be maintained despite the War for Kuwait, rejected any Balkanization of Iraq as well. Finally, the very thought of an Islamic government in Baghdad was anathema to Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf shaykhdoms. In the end, many argued that maintenance of Saddam Hussein was preferable to Iraq's dismantlement. Consequently, the potential resurgence of Iraq in the Gulf region must be considered.

In light of these considerations, this document seeks to accomplish four tasks.

- First, it reviews Iraqi political-military objectives before and after 2 August 1990, identifies Baghdad's current national security policies, and evaluates its near-term strategic objectives.
- Second, it presents a comprehensive overview of internal and external developments in Saudi Arabia and the five smaller Arab Gulf shaykhdoms, identifying challenges and constraints facing the six conservative ruling families.
- Third, it outlines and assesses various issues in the relationship among the Gulf states.

- **Finally, it identifies the implications of these issues for U.S. political and military strategy in the Persian Gulf region over the next few years.**

Chapter Two

IRAQ: A WANING THREAT?

THE SEARCH FOR HEGEMONY IN THE ARAB WORLD

Since the 1958 Revolution, Iraq has been on a protracted quest for regional supremacy but its goal has been repeatedly thwarted by rivals in the Arab world—first by Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasir, and later by Syria's Hafez al-Asad. Damascus presented unique problems, particularly after the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, which isolated Cairo in the Arab world. Moreover, not only were historical and ideological differences between Syria and Iraq present, but Damascus had supported Iran throughout the Iran-Iraq War. For this "un-Arab" behavior, Iraq wanted Syria condemned by the League of Arab States (LAS). When Baghdad failed to achieve this objective (League rules remained too rigid for any meaningful policy), it turned to Syria's Lebanese quagmire.

Iraq supplied to General Michel Aoun, a Lebanese nationalist leader who opposed Syria's methodical annexation of his country, all the weapons the latter could absorb. For Hussein, the intention was to weaken Syria's grip on Lebanon and, consequently, discredit Hafez al-Asad among Arab nationalists. The natural result of such an objective, Saddam Hussein fathomed, would enhance Iraq's hegemonic aspirations over the Arab world.¹ For a period of time, the policy worked. In time, however, Hafez al-Asad's patience paid off. When Baghdad invaded its small southern neighbor, the Kuwait "night-

¹Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship*, London and New York: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1990.

mare" overtook Iraq's brief Lebanon adventure both in magnitude and substance, freeing Syria's hand in that beleaguered country.

Iraq was more successful with the LAS when it gained support for its claim to full sovereignty over the Shatt-al-Arab riverway in 1982. Here, GCC states, along with other LAS states that supported Iraq, failed in a monumental way. By supporting Iraq's position on the Shatt al-Arab—which contradicted the terms of United Nations Security Council Resolution 598—GCC states put international law aside. Baghdad was, of course, aware of this subtle nuance. Its move on the Shatt question was an indication that Iraq was desperate to secure something from the war.²

Because Saddam Hussein did not win the Iran-Iraq War outright, Iraq had little to show for the eight-year conflict save for a legacy of lost and ruined lives, a shattered economy, a huge debt burden, and substantial physical damage. Adding insult to injury, Iran held 50,000 Iraqi POWs between 20 August 1988 and December 1990. Although Saddam Hussein declared that Iraq had won the Iran-Iraq War, few Iraqis believed him. Even fewer dared to speak out, criticize his policies, or propose political reforms.³

Within a matter of a few months after the August 1988 cease-fire, Saddam Hussein suppressed his Kurdish population and, when few international actors objected to his use of chemical weapons against the Kurds, the Iraqi strongman was galvanized to launch a two-pronged foreign policy initiative: a propaganda war on Syria and an intimidation war on the conservative Arab Gulf states within the GCC.⁴

²Saddam Hussein muscled a pro-Iraqi LAS resolution to support his new position on the disputed Shatt al-Arab waterway which was last "negotiated"—ironically between Saddam Hussein and Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi—at the OPEC Algiers Conference in 1975. See Majid Khadduri, *The Gulf War: The Origins and Implications of the Iran-Iraq Conflict*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 57-63.

³An assessment of the Iran-Iraq War is beyond the scope of this report, although the war's political and economic consequences proved to be crucial reasons for Baghdad's aggression against Kuwait in 1990. For a thorough discussion of the changing environment of the region after the August 1988 cease-fire, see George Joffe and Keith McLachlan, *Iran and Iraq: Building on the Stalemate*, Special Report Number 1164, London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, November 1988.

⁴Baghdad's on-going anti-Kurdish campaign is one of the most intractable features of the Baath party's quest for supremacy. Two recent exhaustive studies shed light on some of the atrocities committed against Kurds and other minority populations:

When Saddam Hussein looked at his financial portfolio, bad news was evident. Virtually all imports, the expense of maintaining a large army, and servicing an \$80 billion debt burden could not be accomplished with a mere \$15 billion in projected revenues for 1990. This was especially true because Iraq wanted to rebuild its war-damaged facilities as well as expand its industrial capacity.⁵

The need to show something for the war, coupled with a voracious appetite for cash, crystallized Iraq's hostile relationship with Kuwait. Not only was Iraq reviving dormant territorial claims on Kuwait, but it also coveted the latter's financial empire. Iraq challenged Kuwait rather than Jordan or Syria precisely because of the billions of dollars that the emirate could provide the Baathi regime in a very short time. Kuwait's generosity as a donor—it had provided Iraq with \$10 billion during the war—had little effect. Iraq could have easily obtained another \$10 billion to \$100 billion without invading, but this proved irrelevant: Baghdad wanted everything.

Although this approach was extremely risky, Saddam Hussein's strategic as well as political objectives presupposed substantial financial might. Iraq's Robin Hood policy—namely, his demand between August 1990 and January 1991 that the wealthy oil exporters transfer massive sums to the poorer Arab states—was a part of Iraq's long-term strategy. Saddam Hussein's self-portrayal as a champion of the poorer Arabs won him some sympathy and embarrassed Arab leaders with less than impeccable records on this score.⁶

David A. Korn, *Human Rights in Iraq*, A Middle East Watch Book, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, and Samir al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear: The Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1990.

⁵Jean-Pierre Langellier, "Une guerre tant annoncée . . .," *Le Monde*, 18 January 1991, pp. 1, 4.

⁶There is a good deal of controversy regarding GCC financial aid to Iraq during the eight-year Iran-Iraq War. In response to an open letter from Saddam Hussein to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, for example, the Saudi monarch declared on 15 January 1991 that Riyadh had given Baghdad \$25.7 billion, broken down as follows: \$5.84 billion in grant aid, \$9.25 billion in concessional loans, \$3.74 billion in military and transport equipment, \$6.75 billion in oil aid, \$95 million in development loans, \$16.7 million in industrial products to reconstruct Basra, \$20.2 million in SABIC (Saudi [Arabian] Basic Industries Corporation) credits, and \$21.3 million in payment for asphalt spreading tractors. See "King Fahd Sends Reply Letter to Saddam," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service-Near East and South Asia* [hereafter FBIS-NES]-91-011, 16 January 1991, pp. 11-13. There are similar controversies regarding Kuwaiti and UAE financial support, although actual figures are not available. Pierre Salinger reported that the Kuwaitis agreed to pay \$9 billion to Iraq at the ill-fated 31 July 1990 Jidda Conference convened to settle the war of words between the two states. According to Salinger,

Strategic Objectives Before 2 August 1990

A few months after the August 1988 cease-fire, Iraq decided to reverse its heretofore lucrative relationship with Kuwait. In a week-long summit between Saddam Hussein and Kuwait Crown Prince Shaykh Saad al-Abdallah al-Salem in Baghdad in February 1989, Iraq demanded that its debts be written off and that the border between the two countries be revised to give it access to the Gulf from Umm Qasr. Kuwait's Warba and Bubiyan Islands were to be "leased" to Iraq for a period of 99 years. The meeting ended in sharp disagreement.⁷ Iraqi jets were spotted overflying Kuwait a few days later. Not only was meaningful dialogue between Iraq and Kuwait over, but old claims and suspicions were being revived. Iraq's financial demands from Kuwait were only the first salvo of a barrage of fire ultimately involving Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE. Following the February encounter, the Iraqi propaganda machine lambasted the al-Saud royal family for its alleged un-Islamic behavior and, in the OPEC forum, sided with Iran against the GCC states.

In parallel with this intimidation campaign, Baghdad accelerated its military programs aimed at strengthening its position in its disputes with Syria, Kuwait, Iran, Israel, and even with Turkey. Saddam Hussein's strategic objectives, in hindsight, included not just achieving parity with Iran or Syria, or even NATO member Turkey, but emerging as a dominant regional military power. There were plenty of opportunities to detect this trend in 1989 and 1990, but political expediency blinded Western decisionmakers.⁸

In August 1989, for example, a major ammunition plant was destroyed near Baghdad, killing hundreds. When journalists tried to gather information on the blast, at least one—the Iranian-born London *Observer* correspondent Farzad Bazoft—was arrested in September, convicted for being a spy on 10 March 1990, and hanged

Izzat Ibrahim, negotiating for Baghdad, declared that he was not authorized "to accept less than \$10 billion." To avoid a stalemate, Salinger asserted that King Fahd agreed to donate the additional billion. See Pierre Salinger and Eric Laurent, *Secret Dossier: The Hidden Agenda Behind the Gulf War*, New York: Penguin Books, 1991, pp. 73-76.

⁷Ahmad al-Jarallah, "Beginning of a New Chapter," *Arab Times*, 6 February 1989, p. 6; see also "Kuwaiti Heir Apparent Al-Sabah, Delegation Visit," *FBIS-NES-89-025*, 8 February 1989, p. 21; "Papers on Talks, Border Issue," *idem*, pp. 21-22; and "Kuwaiti Premier Calls Talks 'Significant,'" *FBIS-NES-89-027*, 10 February 1989, pp. 25-26.

⁸For a noteworthy critique see Adel Darwish and Gregory Alexander, *Unholy Babylon: The Secret History of Saddam's War*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.

five days later.⁹ Since Bazoft was allegedly spying on a missile site, Baghdad's hasty decision to execute him indicated that the reporter may well have stumbled on sensitive information.

Bazoft's execution revealed, at least indirectly, that Iraq's nuclear weapons program may have been far more developed than many suspected. On 28 March 1990, as a memorial service for Bazoft was under way at London's St. Bride Church in Fleet Street, British Customs and Excise officers—with the help of U.S. Customs Service—arrested a group of Iraqis attempting to smuggle a consignment of triggers for nuclear devices (krytons). This was followed by new details of an alleged "Super-Gun" being built in Iraq.¹⁰ From the Iraqi perspective, none of these defense-related acquisitions were illegal or unwarranted. Rather, Saddam Hussein saw them as essential elements of his efforts to restore the dignity of the Iraqi and Arab masses. It was a Nasir-like position with the important difference that Gulf Arabs were both physically and psychologically more distant from their levantine brethren. Iraqis argued that Arab oil wealth provided the means for lifting the Arab world from its abysmal position. Saddam Hussein, in a widely noted speech, threatened on 2 April 1990 to use chemical weapons against Israel while denying any knowledge of an Iraqi nuclear program.¹¹ In hindsight, it is clear that the primary audience for this threat was the Gulf region; Saddam was trying to terrorize his Arab brethren.

Although he failed to accomplish the stated objective of Arab supremacy in the Gulf region, Saddam Hussein calculated that his prowess, and eventual grab of Kuwait, would have limited repercussions outside the Gulf. When Kuwait and the UAE overproduced their OPEC oil quotas in late 1989/early 1990, resulting in a sharp fall in prices to around \$14 a barrel, Iraq called for discipline and a \$25 bench price. Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz accused Kuwait of stealing oil from the Iraqi part of the Rumaylah oil field on 15 July 1990 and Saddam Hussein, marking the 22nd anniversary of the Iraqi

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 248-250.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 178-193; the "Super-Gun," an invention of a Canadian-born scientist, Gerald Bull, could fire shells 2,500 miles. Bull's assassination in March 1990 led many to speculate that his then close association with Iraq persuaded unidentified intelligence services to kill him. For an informative assessment, see James Adams, *Bull's Eye: The Assassination and Life of Supergun Inventor Gerald Bull*, New York: Times Books, 1992.

¹¹"President Warns Israel, Criticizes U.S.," *FBIS-NES-90-064*, 3 April 1990, pp. 32-36.

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revolution on the 17th, threatened "to cut throats."¹² A series of letters between Tariq Aziz and League of Arab States Secretary-General Chidli Klibi led to a round of negotiations involving virtually all parties, but to no avail.¹³

In sum, before the 2 August invasion of Kuwait, Iraqi objectives centered on gaining Arab leadership by boosting oil prices, redistributing the resulting gains, and presenting Iraq as the only Arab country capable of earning international respect. Saddam Hussein understood that military power was the fuel that ran the world's engine. Baghdad aimed to achieve a credible military capability and, by acquiring Warba and Bubiyan Islands, to improve Iraq's strategic position in the Gulf region.

These objectives could only be accomplished with a very large financial war chest, explaining Iraq's need for all of Arabia's, including Saudi Arabia's, oil wealth. In Saddam Hussein's view, oil should be in the hands of an Arab leader capable of using it to achieve greatness; he believed that he warranted such status.

Strategic Objectives After 2 August 1990

Iraqi leaders were probably aware that the 2 August occupation of Kuwait could result in a major political change within Iraq. For this reason, Baghdad sought not only to avoid war but also to avoid radical political changes at home.

For reasons that still remain obscure, Iraqis considered that war over Kuwait was not likely.¹⁴ Why did Baghdad feel so certain that allied forces would not go to war to liberate Kuwait?

¹²"Saddam Speech Marks Revolution's 22nd Anniversary," *FBIS-NES-90-137*, 17 July 1990, pp. 20-23.

¹³These exchanges were of critical importance, since they spelled out Baghdad's grievances with both Kuwait and the UAE. "Aziz Assails Kuwait, UAE in Letter to Klibi," *FBIS-NES-90-138*, 18 July 1990, pp. 21-24; see also "Government Reacts to Iraq's 15 July Allegations," *FBIS-NES-90-139*, 19 July 1990, pp. 15-16.

¹⁴It may never be clear what Saddam Hussein believed or did not believe Western powers would do were he to take violent action against Kuwait. What is known, however, is that many conflicting signals reached Baghdad in the spring of 1990. For details, see Salinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-70.

First, Saddam Hussein and his advisors may well have assessed that neither Western nor Arab leaders had the resolve to oppose his "just" action. He must have considered the world community's initial response to the invasion as weak and momentary. His decision to release all Western hostages was probably meant to hasten the deterioration of resistance to Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait. War, Iraq believed, would also be too costly for the West. In the end, Baghdad concluded that allied leaders would favor a political settlement because of their concerns over high casualties and loss of political support at home.

Second, Baghdad believed that President Bush would eventually accept a settlement to "save his presidency." Because Washington and Baghdad improved their relations throughout the 1980s, Saddam Hussein concluded that Washington would maintain cautious policies towards Iraq. To be sure, Baghdad was certainly aware of the American debate regarding Washington's slow adjustment to the demise of the Soviet Empire, and assessed—mistakenly—the lack of a rapid response in that case as a pattern that the Administration would follow in all instances. Saddam Hussein and his advisors further concluded that President Bush would not jeopardize his place in history by jumping on the "colonialist" bandwagon as a new world order was clearly emerging.¹⁵ In this instance, Saddam Hussein assumed that the international response to his heist of Kuwait was, in the end, no concern of the United States or other powers.

Finally, Hussein calculated that Jordan was the weak link in the world's "arbitrarily imposed sanctions," as supplies to Iraq poured through the Hashemite monarchy in contravention of U.N. actions. In extremis, the Iraqis expected that Arab public opinion would swing in their favor if Israel invaded and occupied Jordan in an attempt to attack Iraq. The linkage with the Arab-Israeli conflict had a salutary effect because Iraqi leaders strongly believed that the world community was not ready to resolve the Palestinian question. Would the West risk regional, perhaps even world, instability by insisting on Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait under those circumstances?

¹⁵Murray Waas, "What Washington Gave Saddam for Christmas," in Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf (eds.), *The Gulf War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions*, New York: Random House for Times Books, 1991, pp. 83-95; see also Marcy Darnovsky, L. A. Kauffman and Billy Robinson, "What Will This War Mean?" *ibid.*, pp. 480-486.

On the homefront, political change in Iraq, perhaps even of the radical type, was what really concerned Iraqi Baathis. The Baath leadership, which maintained itself in power through repression, agreed in 1990 to allow minimal divergences of views essentially to salvage a deteriorating economic structure. Attempts to return to the dark days of the late 1970s and early 1980s would almost certainly backfire, they reasoned, and, consequently, they favored a small dose of change.¹⁶ Moreover, because Saddam Hussein identified himself so closely with the Kuwait invasion, and because there was a small probability that he might be forced out of the emirate, Baghdad was somewhat concerned that opposition forces would join forces against him. Saddam Hussein was also very wary of both Hafez al-Asad and Itzhak Shamir. Not only were Syria and Israel adamantly opposed to the survival of the Hussein regime, but along with the United States, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and other countries they were openly discussing the need to check Iraq's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. It is in this context that one must assess the steady Western military build-up of Iraq.¹⁷

Thus, before the outbreak of the War for Kuwait, the Iraqis concluded that Baghdad, deliberately excluded from all previous Gulf security arrangements, was in a position to reshape the region's security framework. Still, and although Saddam Hussein failed to correctly assess the international community's response to his invasion of Kuwait, he stood his ground to save face. It was amply clear that Saddam Hussein could not afford to withdraw from Kuwait without receiving tangible results (such as some movement in the Arab-Israeli dispute), since he believed that capitulating would translate into his ouster from power and, more important, permanently eliminate Iraq's regional ambitions.

¹⁶It is difficult to assess how serious Iraqi leaders were in introducing political and economic reforms. Suffice it to say that cosmetic policies trickled down, albeit at a minimal level. See Amy Kaslow, "Iraq Banks on Its Oil to Fuel Reconstruction," *Middle East Insight* 7:1, January/February 1990, pp. 42-45.

¹⁷It is beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate the implications of what is slowly becoming known as "Iraq-Gate." Suffice it to say that considerable evidence has become known in 1992 regarding Western sales of sophisticated arms and, more important, of advanced computers. To what extent Western governments were encouraging Iraqi ambitions deserves further scrutiny.

THE SEARCH FOR SURVIVAL

Devastated by the month-long air campaign against Iraq, Saddam Hussein reverted to his survival skills by rallying his core Sunni-support base around "nationalist" objectives. For the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies, the prospect that Saddam Hussein might be overthrown by a civil war proved to be highly unpalatable, persuading coalition forces to step back from supporting a Shia/Kurdish rebellion. Consequently, Saddam Hussein claimed to have won his third war.

The Iraqi strongman finally scored an emphatic victory in the uprisings that swept across the country in the aftermath of his defeat in Kuwait. In early March 1991, Baghdad had lost control of all of Kurdistan as well as most of the areas south and east of the capital area, only to regain them by the end of the month. Unlike his earlier campaigns against Iran and Kuwait, this war was fought against two distinct enemies who failed to cooperate politically and coordinate militarily. In northern Iraq, various factions of Kurdish peshmergas (guerrillas) competed among themselves and, at times, appeared to have little or no control over the actions of the resident Kurdish population. In southern Iraq, Shia rebels, financed and backed by Iran, committed atrocities against Iraqi soldiers at least as brutal as anything the central government launched before or after the uprising (see Figure 2.1). Once again, the burden of suffering fell on the shoulders of a "vulnerable civil population already weakened by malnutrition and, in the case of the Shias, by the effects of the war against coalition forces."¹⁸ For the Baathi leadership, going after the Kurds and the Shias proved to be an easy and familiar proposition. There was little doubt that Saddam Hussein would meet this challenge, in part because failing to do so would have ensured the Baath party's fall from power.

The Kurdish Dilemma

The Iraqi government faced a daunting prospect after its impressive military victory over the peshmergas in March 1991. Saddam

¹⁸"Saddam Wins His Third War," *Country Report for Iraq* (hereafter CR-Iraq), No. 2, London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1991, p. 8.

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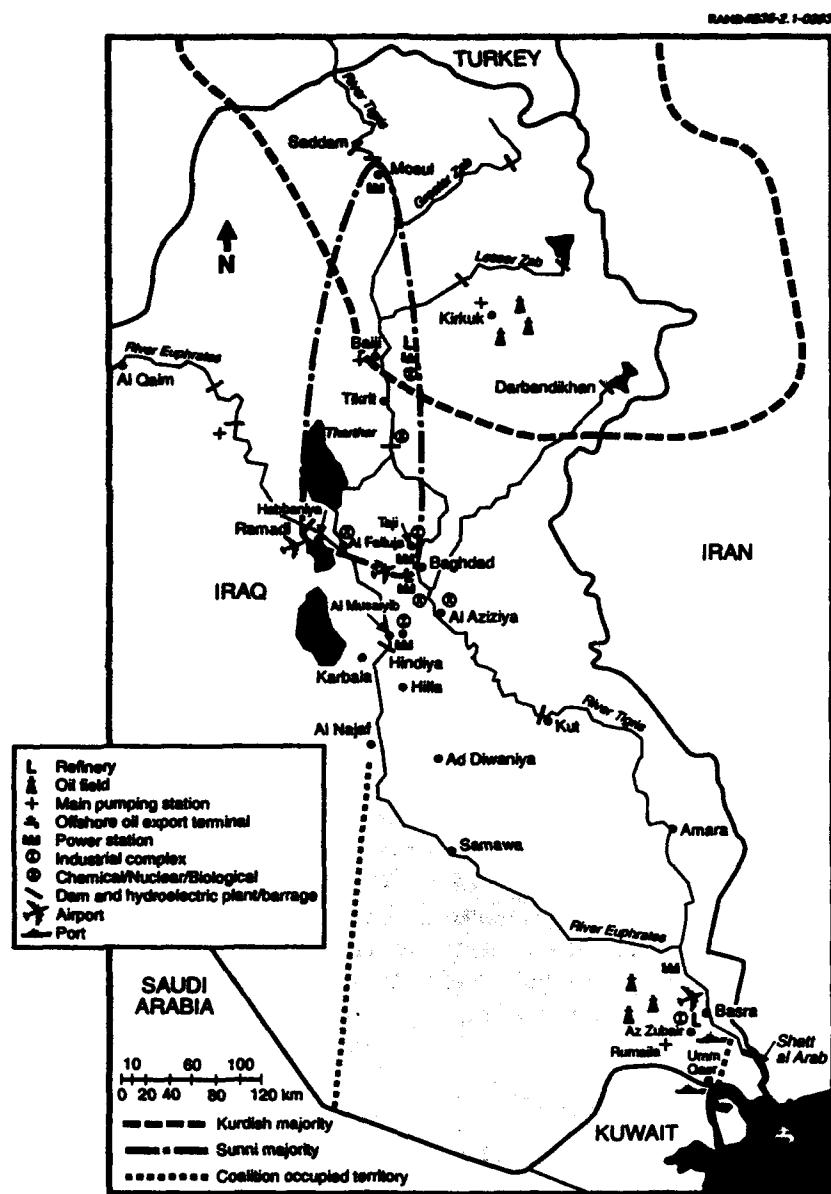


Figure 2.1—Iraq: Major Kurdish and Shia Cities

Hussein's hope that his rout of the guerrillas would end the Kurdish political challenge were soon dashed: An enormous refugee problem, caused by the repression, propelled allied forces to focus attention on Iraq once again. In April 1991, when peshmergas (for the first time since the late 1960s) controlled significant urban Kurdish areas, they assiduously promoted their political message that the Baathi regime in Baghdad was bent on a policy of genocide.¹⁹ Film footage of the aftermath of the chemical attacks on Halabja in 1988 was widely distributed in rebel-held areas.²⁰ But dazed by their sudden responsibilities, Kurdish leaders restricted retaliation against Baathi officials. As a result, many government officials were free to roam among a civilian population that did not disguise its delight at the apparent defeat of Saddam Hussein's army.

When the Iraqi army counterattacked in late March, the urban population of Kurdistan panicked. Fearful that the military would once again resort to chemical warfare and realizing that they were implicated in the revolt by their euphoric reaction to earlier peshmerga victories, hundreds of thousands of Kurdish civilians fled towards the Turkish and Iranian borders. The size of the exodus—at its peak some 2 million people were estimated to be on the move—together with the inhospitality of the terrain and the weather triggered widespread sympathy in the West.²¹ Two other factors focused the world's attention. First, international media were again able to operate within Iraq without the stifling restrictions imposed on them by both sides during Operation Desert Storm. Media coverage of the Kurds' plight was intense and far less sanitized than coverage of the battles for the liberation of Kuwait City. The second factor was the role played by Turkey. Ankara sealed its borders because it was unwilling to allow so many refugees into its sensitive border areas where the majority of the population was already Kurdish. This action left hundreds of thousands of refugees stranded in desperate conditions—often quite literally perched on a mountain top—be-

¹⁹See, for example, "Saddam Will Not Survive" [An interview with Jalal Talabani], *Der Spiegel*, 25 March 1991, pp. 214-217, in FBIS-NES-91-058, 26 March 1991, pp. 28-29.

²⁰Sheri Laizer, *Into Kurdistan: Frontiers Under Fire*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1991, p. 100, *passim*.

²¹Jean-Pierre Langellier, "Deux millions d'hommes en fuite en Turquie et en Iran," *Le Monde*, 17 April 1991, pp. 1, 8; see also Edmund O'Sullivan, "Iraq's Days of Agony and Hope," *Middle East Economic Digest* (hereafter *MEED*), 35:13, 5 April 1991, pp. 4-6.

tween the advancing Iraqi army from the south and Turkish border guards.

Turkish officials were genuinely concerned with the plight of Kurdish refugees. Their own sizeable Kurdish minority, however, and the intermittent rebel activity in the Kurdish region of southeastern Turkey, stiffened their resolve. Ankara panicked when the arrival of Iraqi Kurds resulted in considerable sympathy and aid from Turkey's own Kurds. Moreover, Turkey feared that if Iraqi Kurds were to be formally recognized by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), then Ankara would be obligated to allow the Kurds to stay for as long as they felt threatened by Iraq. Turgut Ozal's government argued that this would severely tax Turkey's economic and political resources. Turkish officials also argued that there had been little demonstrable benefit to Turkey for its risky stand during the war, including authorizing the use of bases in Turkey for American aircraft undertaking bombing missions over Iraq.²²

Washington was not eager to get involved in the Kurdish question but felt pressure to do so in the wake of Iraq's mauling of Shias in the south. On March 27, General Norman Schwarzkopf suggested that he had opposed Washington's decision to end the war early (i.e., before the complete destruction of Iraqi ground forces). Schwarzkopf also regretted the freedom of action he had permitted for Iraqi helicopters. Although this particular chapter ended with an apology from the general, it served to reinforce the impression that U.S. policy on Iraq and the Kurds was dangerously adrift.²³ As if to confirm the absence of political will, Secretary of State Baker visited Kurdish and other Iraqi refugees at the Turkish border for a nine-minute photo opportunity on April 8. European countries, led by Britain and France, spearheaded relief programs for the Kurds. The extremely difficult logistical problems, and "the death of a number of

²²For a thorough discussion of Turkey's role in the War for Kuwait, see Ian O. Lesser, *Bridge or Barrier? Turkey and the West After the Cold War*, RAND, R-4204-AF/A, 1992.

²³In a television interview with David Frost, broadcast on 27 March 1991, General Schwarzkopf conceded that he was "suckered" by the Iraqis to allow them the use of helicopters. Moreover, the general acknowledged that President Bush had overruled his "recommendation" that U.S. forces "continue to march" in the war. The dispute ended with a Schwarzkopf apology "for his poor choice of words" regarding the decision to end the war. See Martin Yant, *Desert Mirage: The True Story of the Gulf War*, Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1991, pp. 163-164.

refugees crushed under the heavy palettes of aid being dropped from helicopters," heightened the sense of crisis.²⁴

The plight of the Kurds strengthened Saddam Hussein's hand. On April 19 a group of Kurdish leaders, led by Jalal Talabani of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and including Sami Abdul Rahman of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, Nerchirvan Barzanchi, a nephew of Massoud Barzani of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, and Rasoul Memend of the Socialist Party were invited to Baghdad for talks with the Iraqi leadership, including Saddam Hussein himself.²⁵ The delegation went to Baghdad to negotiate the fate of Izzat Ibrahim, the chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, Hussain Kamel Hassan, the son-in-law of President Saddam Hussein and minister of industry, and General Mahir Rashid, the former army chief of staff, who were being held as "hostages" by peshmergas at Irbil.²⁶ On April 24, Talabani announced that an agreement in principle was reached between the government and the Kurdish leadership, to implement the 11 March 1970 autonomy agreement.²⁷ Distressed by the fate of hundreds of thousands of Kurds stranded in northern Iraq, Talabani called on Kurdish refugees to return home and for foreign forces to leave Iraq.²⁸ A month later, Talabani declared that Kurds were "deceived by the propaganda of allied forces, and their overestimations of Iraqi army losses."²⁹

The outline of the 1970 agreement was something both sides could agree upon relatively easily, but negotiations on the details of its implementation dragged on without result. Kurdish leaders demanded that Baghdad release all political prisoners, allow for the safe return

²⁴"Safe Haven Promoted by Europeans," *CR-Iraq* 2-91, p. 9.

²⁵"Negotiations with Kurdish Rebels Reported," *FBIS-NES-91-077*, 22 April 1991, pp. 26-27.

²⁶"Kurds Said 'Holding' Ibrahim, Defense Minister," *FBIS-NES-91-078*, 23 April 1991, p. 15.

²⁷The 11 March 1970 agreement recognized the "legitimacy of the Kurdish nationality" and promised Kurdish linguistic rights, Kurdish participation in government, and Kurdish administrators for the Kurdish area. It also envisaged the implementation of agrarian and administrative laws. See Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-132.

²⁸"Saddam, Talabani Meet; 'Agreement' Reached," *FBIS-NES-91-080*, 25 April 1991, pp. 13-14.

²⁹"Talabani Reviews 'Difficulties' in Negotiations," *FBIS-NES-91-111*, 10 June 1991, pp. 26-27.

of Kurdish refugees, including all those exiled over the past several decades, and implement a multiparty democratic system.³⁰ Furthermore, there were four critical demands: that Kirkuk be included in the definition of Kurdistan, that part of the region's oil revenues be controlled directly by the Kurds, that extensive Kurdish participation be allowed in the central government in Baghdad, and that international guarantees be included in any agreement.³¹ In early May 1991, Massoud Barzani presented to the Iraqi government new proposals for an autonomous Kurdistan. The proposal called for a limited presence of Iraqi armed forces in Kurdistan with all internal security matters being handled by ethnic Kurds. It also called for an independent constitutional court to sort out future disputes between the Kurds and Baghdad. More important, Barzani declared that autonomous Kurdistan should have its own budget.³² Baghdad insisted, however, that Kurdistan could not maintain an independent foreign policy, and that the region exclude Kirkuk, Khanaqin, and Mandali. Kirkuk was deemed so crucial that Kurdish leaders were ready to relinquish their claim on the region's oil revenues in return for administrative control of the city. "The territorial definition of Kurdistan, one of the crucial negotiating points, remained unsolved" in late June 1991.³³ The United Nations failed to adopt appropriate policies to guarantee any pact on Kurdish autonomy even though the Security Council had been favorably disposed to provide guarantees with the overt threat of military intervention should Baghdad fail to honor it.

The sudden dismissal of Prime Minister Saddoun Hamadi in September 1991 sent the chilled Iraqi-Kurdish autonomy talks into a state of deep freeze. Dr. Hamadi had made a rather conciliatory statement on the Kurdish question in August, in which he reaffirmed Iraq's commitment to constitutional government and democracy.³⁴ At the end of August, Massoud Barzani announced that negotiations were completed and a draft pact drawn up. He expected that after

³⁰"Kurdish Sources Cited on Agreement with Baghdad," *FBIS-NES-91-126*, 1 July 1991, pp. 18-19.

³¹"Kurds Seek Guarantees," *MEED* 35:19, 17 May 1991, p. 10.

³²"Kurds Negotiate a Separate Deal with Baghdad—But Details of Agreement Prove Difficult," *CR-Iraq* 2-91, p. 11.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴"Shake-Up at the Centre Consolidates Saddam's Position," *CR-Iraq* 4-91, p. 10.

appropriate deliberations both the Kurdish leadership and population would support it.³⁵ This optimistic statement was made despite reports that Iraqi armed forces were again massing around Kirkuk in what looked like the beginnings of an offensive.

Fighting broke out in the Kirkuk region in early September. Iraqi attacks spread north of the 36th parallel, a zone in which military activity had been forbidden under the terms of the conditions imposed by coalition military commanders earlier in the year. Coming just two weeks before the expiration of the mandate of Operation Poised Hammer (to protect Kurds against Iraqi retaliation), the Iraqi action was a risky provocation. But Baghdad's aggressive policies won the day as allied forces were steadily pulled out of the area.

Saddam Hussein took full advantage of the split that emerged between the principal Kurdish leaders. Barzani and Talabani disagreed on the terms of their joint and separate agreements with Baghdad, which continued its anti-Kurdish military campaign. While Massoud Barzani denounced the clashes between Iraqi troops and the peshmergas, saying that they were the work of Kurdish opportunists intent on destroying the autonomy agreement, Jalal Talabani accused Baghdad of a breach of faith. Left to their perpetual intra-clan disputes, the Kurds failed to coalesce and, by the end of 1991, were mired in conflict. Barzani, for example, urged his supporters to accept the autonomy agreement because, he argued, it was the best deal available. Talabani, on the other hand, was sharply critical of the terms of the deal, especially in its exclusion of Kirkuk from Kurdistan, and the omission of any progress on democratization measures for Iraq as a whole.³⁶

Finally, facing strong criticisms within the Kurdish community, Barzani was forced to concede that negotiations with Baghdad were inconclusive. He stressed that not a single square inch of Kurdistan would be relinquished to foreign powers, and that Kirkuk and Khanaqin would be included in Kurdistan. These remarks revealed the depth of Barzani's anguish. Frustrated by the unending war of words and swords among the different Kurdish factions, he called for freely contested elections to determine the best negotiating strategy

³⁵"Opposition Figure Criticizes Proposed Agreement," *FBIS-NES-91-165*, 26 August 1991, p. 21.

³⁶"Split Emerges in Kurdish Leadership," *CR-Iraq 4-91*, p. 9.

for dealing with Baghdad.³⁷ Saddam Hussein relished this internal Kurdish squabbling as it allowed him further time to consolidate his hold on northern Iraq.

With Saadoun Hamadi no longer in the premiership and Massoud Barzani hardening his position, Saddam Hussein launched a major offensive against Kurdish peshmergas at the beginning of October 1991. The bloody battles resulted in yet another mass exodus from southern Kurdish towns such as Kifri and Kalar as well as Arbat and Sulaymaniyah. In Sulaymaniyah, for example, the peshmergas held their ground and massacred at least 60 Iraqi prisoners in front of foreign journalists.³⁸ Similar atrocities were reported elsewhere. Eventually, however, Baghdad launched heavy artillery attacks and, since few Western governments expressed any outrage, forced the opposition into submission.

The Shia Uprising

Within days of its military defeat in Kuwait, Iraqi government authority was being severely challenged by Shia dissidents and disaffected regular army units in Basra. The Teheran-based Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI) claimed responsibility for the uprising as a flood of Iraqi refugees headed south towards Kuwait with tales of pitched battles between rebels and Republican Guard units. Western intelligence reports confirmed that fierce fighting was under way in Basra, Nassiriyah, Samawa, Zubair, al-Amarrah, al-Qurnah, Najaf, Karbala, and smaller towns throughout the south. The extent of the rebellion confirmed SAIRI's claims that its members controlled these cities. By early March 1991, however, the revolt failed, as Republican Guards regained control of Iraq's second largest city. By March 7 only Najaf and Karbala—the holy Shia cities—were still holding out.³⁹

The uprisings focused attention on the opposition in exile, which had organized itself helter-skelter in December 1990 under a 17-member umbrella group, known as the Iraqi Joint Action Committee (IJAC),

³⁷"Kurdistan Front Plans to Hold Elections 'Soon,'" *FBIS-NES-91-241*, 17 December 1991, pp. 31-32.

³⁸"Kurds and Baghdad Sign Ceasefire Pact," *MEED* 35:41, 18 October 1991, p. 17.

³⁹Jonathan Crusoe, "Saddam Hangs On," *MEED* 35:10, 15 March 1991, p. 6.

and which included SAIRI, the Shia al-Dawa party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), and the Iraq Communist Party (ICP). With SAIRI the most prominent member of the group, much of the media coverage was given to its leader, Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, based in Teheran. SAIRI had invested a great deal of effort in organizing and indoctrinating Iraqi prisoners of war held in Iran for much of the 1980s. According to SAIRI, 5,000 of these activists, organized as the *firqat-taibin* (The Righteous Ones), were involved in the southern uprising, fighting alongside dissident members of the regular army. IJAC leaders reached a broad agreement on 13 March 1991 at their Beirut meeting where they called for the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, for the total elimination of the ruling Arab Baath Socialist Party, and for the introduction of a democratic coalition government in Baghdad.⁴⁰

These statements were made even as opposition leaders admitted that the uprising was in serious difficulty, lacking organization, co-ordination, and ammunition. Iran was the only regional power willing to invest heavily in the Shia uprising and Baghdad took notice; Teheran could no longer claim to be a neutral bystander. The Iranian Revolution's decade-long rhetoric, to assist its Shia brethren in the first instance, was on the line.

Baghdad was amply aware of Iran's potential role in the uprising. It dispatched then deputy prime minister Saadoun Hamadi to Teheran on 4 March, to present the Iraqi government's position on the Shia revolt, warning that it would oppose any interference in internal Iraqi affairs while promising to take care not to damage the holy places in Najaf and Karbala.⁴¹ Iraq felt that radical factions in Teheran, especially those associated with the former interior minister, Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, "had clearly double-crossed Baghdad by first supporting Iraq's stand against the West (and by sending supplies to Iraq in violation of U.N. sanctions) and then by shifting support to SAIRI at

⁴⁰"Opposition Groups Unite," *MEED* 35:11, 22 March 1991, pp. 11-12.

⁴¹It is difficult to determine what transpired at this meeting, but enough can be surmised to conclude that Hamadi may have made an offer of democratic pluralism in Iraq if Teheran would end its support of the rebellion. Iran rejected this offer, concluding, perhaps prematurely, that Saddam Hussein and his government were under duress and would fall in the near future.

what was perceived to be the crucial moment.⁴² Hamadi told his Iranian counterpart that Baghdad was willing and ready to crush the rebellion by adopting a carrot and stick approach.

Indeed, Saddam Hussein's reaction to the uprising was a classic combination of repression and cooption. He first ordered the immediate expulsion of all foreign journalists on 7 March 1991, and dismissed the interior minister, Samir Muhammad Abd al-Wahab al-Shaykhali. Al-Shaykhali was replaced by the minister of local government and former governor of Kuwait, Ali Hasan al-Majid, who was responsible for the 1990 crackdown in Kuwait as well as the "pacification" of the Kurds in 1988. In turn, the local government ministry which, until then, was also responsible for the autonomous Kurdish region, was merged into the Ministry of the Interior, whose primary responsibility covered internal security matters.

On the ground, a division of Republican Guards, presumably loyal troops because they were not involved in the military debacle in Kuwait, was moved from the Turkish border to the south.⁴³ Simultaneously, Baghdad issued a series of statements promising a rapid restoration of essential services, such as electricity and safe drinking water. On 4 March 1991, a general pardon was announced by Saddam Hussein in the name of the RCC for all Iraqi army deserters.⁴⁴ Two days later, Baghdad promulgated a hike in food rations and pay increases for the army, with the Republican Guards getting an additional ID100 (\$324) per month.⁴⁵

As Iraqi forces regained the upper hand in the south, Saddam Hussein focused his attention on the north, continuing his decade-long attempt to subjugate the Kurdish population. Shias were aghast at the international focus devoted to the Kurdish plight when so little attention was given to them. This experience left a bitter taste for the Shia majority. Relations between Kurdish and Shia rebel groups, which were strained to begin with, reached a new low. SAIRI de-

⁴²"Iran's Role Raises Eyebrows," *CR-Iraq 1-91*, p. 12.

⁴³O'Sullivan, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴"RCC Decree Pardons Deserters, Absentees 4 Mar," *FBIS-NES-91-042*, 4 March 1991, p. 33.

⁴⁵The 6 March decree awarded Republican Guards an additional ID100, volunteers, internal security forces, and special agencies an additional ID50, and conscripts an additional ID25. These gifts were called "Mother of Battle appropriations." See "Salaries of Military Personnel Raised," *FBIS-NES-91-044*, 6 March 1991, p. 27.

nounced the Kurdish autonomy agreement, interpreting it as a clever ploy by Saddam Hussein to cling to power. SAIRI further denounced the government for capitulating to outside forces by allowing foreign troops to stay on Iraqi soil.

The Shia rebellion was all but over by the end of March, with substantial damage caused to the Shia shrines in Najaf and Karbala—Hamadi's assurances notwithstanding—as well as to the towns themselves. One of Iraq's most respected Shia clerics, Grand Ayatollah Haj Sayyed Abul-Qasim al-Khu'i, was paraded on Iraqi television to denounce the rebels.⁴⁶

Despite these pressures, Shia resistance in the south did not collapse, because of Iran's support. Teheran acknowledged that it was providing assistance to Iraqi Shias engaged in hit and run actions in Basra and in the towns along the Tigris to the north: Tanuma, Qurna, Amara, Gharbi and Kut.⁴⁷ Rebel forces claimed that they controlled various towns—including Basra—during the night, although this was never confirmed by independent sources. The devastation in the south was appalling, however, as Shias fled Iraq. An estimated 60,000 made their way into Iran and an additional 20,000 went to Safwan in coalition-occupied-Iraq. Most of those who reached Safwan were airlifted to a refugee camp near Rafha in Saudi Arabia after allied troops withdrew from Iraq at the end of April. Still, the bulk of Shia refugees stayed within the country, fleeing into the marshes of southern Iraq. Although rebel sources claimed 800,000 were hiding in these areas, U.N. sources at the beginning of June 1991 asserted that 400,000–500,000 Shias were believed to be in the marshes and were vulnerable to imminent Iraqi military offensives.⁴⁸

Lack of media coverage of this disaster befalling the civilian population meant that there was no popular pressure in the West to take action on behalf of the Shias. As a result, no safe havens were established in the south. France's former foreign minister Claude

⁴⁶"Opposition Radio on Abduction of Al-Khu'i, Son," FBIS-NES-91-056, 22 March 1991, pp. 14–15; see also "Further Reportage on Ayatollah Al-Khu'i," FBIS-NES-91-057, 25 March 1991, pp. 10–11.

⁴⁷The acknowledgement was made by Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani during his Friday prayers sermon at Teheran University on 12 April, 1991. See, "Rafsanjani Delivers Second Sermon on Gulf Crisis," FBIS-NES-91-072, 15 April 1991, pp. 61–66.

⁴⁸"Resistance in South Continues," CR-Iraq 2-91, p. 12.

Cheysson conveyed a principal explanation of this inaction: he expressed satisfaction that the Shia rebellion was "crushed and that the threat of further gains by Islamic fundamentalists in the Gulf thereby averted."⁴⁹

Relations between Iran and Iraq had returned to a state of strain by the time the uprising was crushed. In early April 1991, both countries traded accusations of border incursions, and Iraq formally asked for the return of 148 of its aircraft, flown to Iran to escape the allied air offensive. Teheran acknowledged that 22 aircraft were in its custody, and in mid-April declared that these would be kept as partial settlement for its reparation claim against Iraq arising from their 1980-1988 war.⁵⁰

Thus, in his search for survival, Saddam Hussein had been able to adopt important strategic decisions with respect to both the Kurdish and Shia-dominated regions, as soon as the rebellions against his authority started. Kirkuk and Mosul in the north, and Basra, Najaf, and Karbala in the south, were subjected to unrelenting government attacks and eventual control. Northern mountains and southern marshes were temporarily left for refugees to come and go as they pleased. In Iraqi Kurdistan, Baghdad established a *cordon sanitaire* around the major cities and withdrew its forces and all services. That policy saved scarce resources while leaving Kurdish leaders to bicker among themselves and plead for meager international assistance. Since no alternative government existed in the south, Saddam Hussein unleashed his forces on helpless Shias who, despite some assistance from Iran, eventually capitulated. The stalemate continued throughout 1991 and it was in southern Iraq that foreign relief agencies were most concerned for the welfare of the population.

Political Reforms

As the Iraqi regime's confidence in its ability to suppress the Kurdish and Shia rebellions rose, Saddam Hussein on 22 March 1991 reshuffled his cabinet, promoting the most prominent Shia in government—Saadun Hammadi—to the post of prime minister. Another

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ "Foreign Ministry Protests to Iraq on Aircraft," FBIS-NES-91-073, 16 April 1991, p. 49.

Shia, Muhammad Hamdah al-Zubaydi, was appointed deputy prime minister. The government's two most prominent apologists during the Kuwait adventure, foreign minister Tariq Aziz and information minister Latif Jasim, were both demoted in what appeared to be an attempt to find scapegoats for the disaster that befell Iraq. Tariq Aziz was shifted to the largely ceremonial post of second deputy prime minister while Latif Jasim disappeared from public view altogether.⁵¹

Taha Yasin Ramadan, a long-serving member of the RCC from northern Iraq, was appointed vice president. Two relatives of Saddam Hussein kept a high profile in this new cabinet, indicating that political reforms would be cosmetic in nature. His cousin Ali Hasan al-Majid retained the interior ministry portfolio, while his son-in-law (and cousin) Husayn Kamal Hasan was made minister of defense in a subsequent reshuffle on 6 April 1991.⁵² His previous position, as minister of industry and military industrialization, was downgraded with the announcement that the country's military industries would not be rebuilt, and the ministry entrusted to his former undersecretary, Lieutenant General Amir Hammudi al-Saadi. Other appointments brought technocrats into the cabinet.

Saddam Hussein also committed himself to creating a multiparty democratic system that would establish "new foundations in the country's political life."⁵³ National Assembly Speaker Saadi Mahdi Salih further declared that these measures "require[d] all Iraqis to forge ahead diligently to achieve development and progress after expanding the base of popular participation in executing the country's affairs."⁵⁴ The assembly was thus ready, according to Salih, to expedite deliberations on the constitution, which upheld the principles of a free press and multiparty democracy.

On 27 March 1991, Saddam Hussein gave another robust defense of the rule of law, emphasizing that the new Iraq would be an open so-

⁵¹"Saddam Decrees Cabinet Changes 23 March," *FBIS-NES-91-057*, 25 March 1991, p. 9.

⁵²"New Defense Minister, Others Appointed," *FBIS-NES-91-067*, 8 April 1991, p. 30-31.

⁵³"Saddam Addresses Nation, Calls for Reform," *FBIS-NES-91-052*, 18 March 1991, pp. 28-33.

⁵⁴"Assembly Speaker Assails U.S. Draft Resolution," *FBIS-NES-91-057*, 25 March 1991, p. 13.

society. He even admitted that the Baath Party had failed in meeting the social grievances of the Iraqi people.⁵⁵ But a series of presumably interconnected developments followed as the regime strengthened its hold on domestic affairs. On 12 April 1991, the information minister announced that presidential elections would be held in the near future, and on the 23rd, the RCC decided that some of its "powers provided for in the Constitution," were being transferred to the cabinet.⁵⁶ This dramatic announcement, published in the political daily *BABIL*, indicated that Saddam Hussein was strengthening his power while diminishing that of the party bureaucracy.

In mid-May the feared Revolutionary Court was abolished. Kurdish leaders involved in the autonomy negotiations with Baghdad reported that Saddam Hussein went even further, promising to disband the RCC altogether, call for free parliamentary elections, and issue a general amnesty.⁵⁷ By the end of 1992, however, none of these promises had been kept.

To be sure, Saddam Hussein introduced cosmetic reforms, starting in the fall of 1991, to appease his population. These reforms were accompanied by periodic purges of the military. Still, some of these reforms were bound to have far more lasting consequences for Saddam Hussein's successor than for himself. New parties, for example, were permitted to organize in Iraq after the RCC passed its 34-article "Political Parties Law" specifying that parties could not be formed on sectarian, racial, or religious grounds. The law permitted religious parties to exist if they were multidenominational, while forbidding any party espousing atheism or anti-Arabism. Moreover, the law stipulated that no party could receive funds from abroad, stipulating the death penalty for breaches of this regulation. Finally, no parties could recruit members of the armed forces or state security services.⁵⁸ With limitations such as these in place, it was clear that Iraq would not resemble a Western-style liberal democracy and that those harboring such visions would be removed from positions of authority.

⁵⁵"INA Reports Saddam Swearing-In Remarks," *FBIS-NES-91-060*, 28 March 1991, pp. 11-12.

⁵⁶"RCC Returns Constitutional Powers to Ministers," *FBIS-NES-91-078*, 23 April 1991, p. 15.

⁵⁷"And Democracy Promised Again," *CR-Iraq 2-91*, p. 15.

⁵⁸"Text of New Political Parties Law," *FBIS-NES-91-170*, 3 September 1991, pp. 28-29.

On 13 September 1991, Saadun Hammadi was dismissed from both the premiership and the RCC. Iraqi radio announced that Hammadi was relieved from his duties for health reasons, but this claim was not persuasive. His removal most probably reflected his failure to deliver on both the reconstruction front as well as the thorny Kurdish question during his term in the premiership. Hammadi was replaced by deputy prime minister Muhammad Hamzah al-Zubaydi who, like Saadun Hammadi, was a Shia. But unlike his talented predecessor, al-Zubaydi lacked any qualification other than his unquestioning loyalty to Saddam Hussein.⁵⁹

Hammadi's removal ushered in a slew of new faces in the 16-man Regional Command of the Baath Party at its tenth Congress held in September 1991.⁶⁰ Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri was confirmed as the party's second-in-command, but very few new faces were added to the 16-man roster. General Abdul-Rahman al-Duri, who led the fighting against Shia rebels in 1991, was a notable exception. Loyalty to Saddam Hussein was more valued than any intrinsic contributions even as the Iraqi strongman was urging his subordinates to assume "that the party ha[d] just staged the revolution." Saddam's calls "that [the] 30 July was with [Iraqis] once again" [using a favorite revolutionary slogan] and that there was a need for the party to "start over so that the country c[ould] have glory, prosperity, and self confidence," was vintage rhetoric.⁶¹ Few party members accepted their leader's magnanimous calls. The majority understood that in his search for political survival, Saddam Hussein was redrawing the Baath Party in his own image. That vision could not tolerate dissension, as the brutality inflicted on Kurds and Shias reminded everyone.

⁵⁹"Prime Minister Hammadi Relieved of Post," FBIS-NES-91-179, 16 September 1991, pp. 16-17.

⁶⁰This was the first Congress since 1982. What transpired at the congress is difficult to ascertain save for a slew of new appointments and the respective "votes" each presumably received. At the conclusion of earlier congresses, the party published full proceedings, which may yet be the case for the 10th. See "Proceedings of Ba'th Party Congress Detailed," FBIS-NES-91-179, 16 September 1991, pp. 17-20.

⁶¹"Saddam Takes Tough Line," MEED 35:38, 27 September 1991, pp. 20-21.

Economic Reforms

Iraqi officials have estimated war damage to the civilian infrastructure at around \$200 billion, with the capital's ten power substations destroyed.⁶² A 5 March 1991 Red Cross report confirmed that power supplies were seriously disrupted in the main cities, and that Baghdad was without telephone, purified water, and sanitation facilities. To meet urgent needs, the Red Cross received a \$700,000 loan from the European Community to bring a mobile water treatment plant to service Baghdad. Reports from Basra and other southern cities suggested that the situation was far worse in the countryside. Red Cross relief supplies, including medicine, food, and chlorine for water purification, were transported overland via Iran and Jordan. Internal movement was difficult since major bridges across the Tigris and Euphrates rivers were destroyed.⁶³

Although the principal objective of coalition forces was to bring about a forced withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait, a number of subsidiary objectives were identified and targeted. By most accounts, allied forces pinpointed purely military targets and achieved "high standards of accuracy and effectiveness in target identification and destruction." In fact, and "to the extent that purely military targets—such as a missile launcher or an aircraft bunker—were of limited use to the civilian economy, the negative multiplier effects of their destruction" were relatively limited.⁶⁴

⁶²"The Economy: —But the Infrastructure Is in a Shambles," *CR-Iraq 1-91*, p. 13; see also "Baghdad Slowly Restores Power Supply," *MEED* 35:10, 15 March 1991, pp. 13-14.

⁶³There is a great deal of controversy on the destruction of Iraq and the difficulties encountered in reconstruction since the end of the war in 1991. Two principal sources of ambiguity render analysis difficult: On the one hand, official propaganda from both sides means that no accurate picture of damage on the ground may be available for quite some time; on the other hand, the damage caused as a result of the internal uprisings by the Kurdish and Shia communities as well as the subsequent suppression of these by Iraqi forces were reported in a cursory fashion. Rather than revisit the debate, the point here is to state that damage was extensive and reconstruction slow. Moreover, Iraq's refusal to accept U.N. sanctions postponed the reconstruction schedule, especially as the state's income was very limited. Almost a year after the end of the war, Iraq was still struggling to rehabilitate its damaged infrastructure. For an early overview of war damages see Louise Cainkar, "Desert Sin: A Post-War Journey Through Iraq," in Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck, *Beyond the Storm: A Gulf Crisis Reader*, New York: Olive Branch Press, 1991, pp. 335-355.

⁶⁴"War Damage Estimates Are Imprecise," *CR-Iraq 2-91*, pp. 15-16.

But in the mayhem of war, allied forces hit as well targets that were of "potential" military utility. Thus, the transportation infrastructure, which involved the movement of men and materiel, was high on the target list, as was the oil refining and distribution system because it provided fuel for transportation. Similarly, electrical production facilities were damaged and destroyed because they provided power for military functions, such as air defense, and to industrial plants involved in the production of war-related supplies. In addition to ammunition factories, chemical and fertilizer plants (potentially to produce chemical weapons) as well as metallurgical facilities (able to produce shell casings and spare parts) were destroyed. By determining that Iraq's "command and control" centers would be taken out, much of the country's telecommunications capacity, including the civilian telephone system and television and radio broadcasting, were also hit hard. Government ministries and office buildings were also regarded as military targets because of their political significance.⁶⁵

To complicate matters further for Iraq, the U.N. Security Council emphasized Baghdad's obligation to accept responsibility for the war and, accordingly, to pay reparations to Kuwait. At the end of April 1991, Iraq asked the Security Council to consider delaying any reparation payments for five years to allow it to service its foreign debt. In a detailed statement, the government declared that it required \$22.5 billion for imports in 1991, including \$900 million to rebuild stocks, \$1.5 billion to cover war damages, \$10 billion for development projects, and \$1.5 billion for services imports. The \$22.5 billion in import requirements compared with Iraq's debt-servicing requirements in 1991, which were estimated at \$28 billion. Nevertheless, with \$1.8 billion in expected revenues for 1991, Iraq's deficit for the year would top \$48 billion. Similar calculations for 1992 and 1993 yielded large deficits as well, even if oil exports averaged 2 million barrels per day (mbpd) each year, and all revenues were made available for use by the Iraqi government (i.e., no reparations

⁶⁵It may be worth recalling that in addition to the aim of getting Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, which was sanctioned by the U.N. Security Council, coalition leaders espoused broader war aims. For example, "President Bush called for the destruction of the Iraqi capability to manufacture all weapons of mass destruction, which legitimized an all-out attack on anything suspected of being part of Iraq's nuclear and chemical facilities, rather than the operational requirement of merely putting such facilities out of commission for the duration of hostilities." See "Economic Policy: —But Civilian Sector Was Hit Hard," *CR-Iraq 2-91*, p. 16.

were paid). The statement estimated an overall deficit of \$150 billion for the 1991-1995 period.⁶⁶

By the end of 1991, shortages were widespread in Iraq, leading the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to warn of severe malnutrition, particularly among children. FAO further declared that prospects for future food production were poor "because of an acute lack of inputs, war damage to irrigation and drainage systems, inadequate power supplies in rural areas and acute shortages of animal feed and veterinary supplies."⁶⁷ Other reports, however, suggested that Iraq was successfully importing large quantities of food despite the embargo.⁶⁸

Such claims failed to explain the rapid increase in food prices. An independent 87-member medical team, coordinated by Harvard University and funded by UNICEF and OXFAM, visited Iraq in August and September 1991 to assess first hand the effect of the war on the economy.⁶⁹ The Harvard team found that "real wages had fallen in between 5 and 7 percent of their pre-August 1990 levels as food prices have risen between 1,500 and 2,000 percent during the same period." The report offered a gloomy assessment of Iraq's health situation, stating that the "mortality rate for children under five years old ha[d] risen from 27.8 percent per thousand live births before the invasion of Kuwait to 104.4 per thousand." Furthermore, 29 percent of Iraqi children were malnourished, according to this report. Infant formula, when available, was expensive for the average wage earner. Finally, the report concluded that "the state of medical services was appalling, with most pre-war services no longer available," and medical drugs in acute shortage.⁷⁰

⁶⁶Edmund O'Sullivan, "The UN Calls Iraq To Account," *MEED* 35:19, 17 May 1991, p. 7; see also "Baghdad Reveals Debt Obligations," *MEED* 35:20, 24 May 1991, p. 19.

⁶⁷"FAO Warns of Famine," *CR-Iraq* 4-91, p. 12.

⁶⁸In sharp contrast to FAO declarations, the British government claimed that Iraq imported over 4 million tons of food between March and October 1991. Part of the food imports, claimed London, was provided as aid and the rest was paid for by Iraqi foreign assets. Leaked intelligence reports arguing that the combination of aid, official imports, black market trade, and sanctions-busting was providing adequate food to the Iraqi population were widely circulated. See "Substantial Food Imports Are Reported," *CR-Iraq* 4-91, p. 13.

⁶⁹It must be emphasized that the report was controversial and the validity of some of its conclusions questionable.

⁷⁰"—But a Harvard Team Finds Hyperinflation," *CR-Iraq* 4-91, p. 13.

In the face of these findings, the Iraqi government claimed reconstruction successes, asserting that its achievements were significant. Although little of what Baghdad declared could be verified, among the more visible accomplishments were the restoration of direct-dial telephone links with Jordan and 48 international lines to the rest of the world. The Nasiriyah power station was also brought on line. According to press reports, 81 of 124 bridges destroyed during the war were repaired, and countless smaller facilities restored to a working level.⁷¹ Reparations to Iraq's infrastructure continued throughout 1992 despite the strict U.N. embargo. In short, Saddam Hussein was fully aware of the need to provide basic services to as large a number of people as possible, if he were to survive in power. Equally useful, however, were the various delaying tactics used by Baghdad to extort international assistance for particular sections of the population. To be sure, Iraq was able to play one agency against another, but its refusal to accept U.N. Security Council resolutions complicated matters and added to the suffering of the citizenry.

NATIONAL SECURITY POLICIES IN THE 1990s

Because of the humiliating loss suffered by Iraqi forces in the Kuwait theater of operations, Saddam Hussein concluded that his survival depended on a strong military, capable of pressuring and, if necessary, crushing the regime's internal foes. Members of the armed forces were offered handsome rewards to return to their posts after the war, and an effort was launched to regroup and retrain the forces and reassert control over Iraq. The need to rebuild the armed forces was made apparent by the rebellions against the regime and Baghdad's response to the uprisings. A cat and mouse game started in March 1991 as rogue units were brought back and entire divisions rebuilt.

Although too early to determine the regime's success with any degree of certainty, Saddam Hussein's pronouncements indicate that he intends to pursue his prewar hegemonic objectives throughout the region. Ironically, conservative Arab Gulf states may be back where they were in August 1990 and must, consequently, adopt appropriate policies to meet Baghdad's unflinching challenges. To achieve these

⁷¹"Government Claims Reconstruction Successes," *CR-Iraq 4-91*, p. 14.

objectives, Baghdad needs to rebuild its armed forces as well as improve its political position in the Persian Gulf region.

The Military Dimension

According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, as many as 2,300 tanks were believed to have survived the war, along with 4,400 armored vehicles, 1,000 heavy artillery pieces, 120 attack helicopters, and 230 transport helicopters. The strength of the army was placed at some 350,000 men in active service, including four divisions of Republican Guards.⁷² These figures were far higher than initial postwar estimates, which placed the number of surviving tanks at 1,000.⁷³ The surviving air force included 30,000 men, half of whom were assigned to air defense. A handful of bombers were believed to have survived, along with an estimated 130 fighter bombers and 125 interceptors. The most urgent need was for spare parts, without which the air force would remain crippled. Given the fact that most of Iraq's arsenal was Soviet-made, and Moscow maintained its support of the U.N.-imposed embargo, few likely suppliers existed to provide needed parts. Libya, China, and North Korea were the most likely candidates. Although fixed-wing aircraft were most severely damaged, a large number of helicopters survived the war and were immediately pressed into active duty in the fighting against the Kurds and the Shia.

Because Saddam Hussein was determined to consolidate his power, the security services emerged stronger than ever, with an estimated 200,000 full-time personnel. According to press reports, internal security was reorganized into four branches, including the Directorate

⁷²International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1991-1992*, London: Brassey's, 1991, pp. 107-108.

⁷³One respected source estimated that over 175,000 prisoners were taken, and perhaps another 100,000 killed and 100,000 wounded. Iraq was estimated to have been left with a 250,000-strong organized army and 1,000 tanks. The remaining elements of the armed forces (about half the total) were estimated to have dispersed in the confusion. See "Revised Soviet Plan Fails to Head Off Ground Attack," *CR-Iraq 1-91*, pp. 10-11. A controversial first reassessment of Iraqi casualties, suggesting that 9,500 (and perhaps as little as 1,500) members of the armed forces were killed in the Kuwait Theatre of Operations during the war, was advanced by a former Defense Intelligence Agency analyst. According to this same source, total casualties stood at a maximum of 36,000 and a minimum of 3,000. See John G. Heidenrich, "The Gulf War: How Many Iraqis Died?" *Foreign Policy*, No. 90, Spring 1993, pp. 108-125.

of Public Security (headed by Sibawi al-Tikriti), the Organization of Military Intelligence (under the command of General Sabir al-Douri), the Directorate of Military Intelligence (headed by General Ahmad Husayn al-Samarrai), and the Special Security Apparatus (under the command of Saddam's younger son Qusay).⁷⁴ Baghdad was adamant in its commitment to regaining full control over the entire country and would resort to its established approaches, which ranged from intimidation to full-scale genocide, to achieve supremacy.

In October 1991, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, Hans Blix, announced that Iraq's nuclear weapons program was so ambitious and advanced that Iraqi scientists were designing a hydrogen bomb. U.N. inspectors found over 700,000 pounds of yellow cake, 250,000 kilos of uranium oxide, and thousands of pounds of additional nuclear materials during their inspections.⁷⁵ In addition, U.N. teams discovered elaborate testing facilities and, by poring over 50,000 pages of documents seized in Baghdad, the identities of major international corporations that had assisted Iraq in acquiring these systems. An initial list of 110 suppliers was released in December 1991. Of these, 43 were American, 25 German, 17 British, 9 Swiss, 7 French, 4 Italian, and 5 from other countries.⁷⁶ These included some of the largest and best known American computer manufacturers, all of whom proceeded with their sales after obtaining Department of Commerce approval.⁷⁷ One

⁷⁴"Armed Forces Are Still Potent," *CR-Iraq 4-91*, p. 11.

⁷⁵"Iraq's Nuclear Weapons Program," *Mednews: Middle East Defense News* 5:1, 14 October 1991, pp. 1-6.

⁷⁶"Iraq's Nuclear Suppliers," *Mednews* 5:5, 9 December 1991, p. 1.

⁷⁷This is yet another controversial issue that cannot be analyzed with ease. It is a fact that the Iraqi nuclear, biological, and chemical (even for that matter the conventional) programs could not have advanced as far as or as fast as they did were it not for massive outside assistance. In the years when Iraq was fighting Iran, assistance to Baghdad was sanctioned for strategic reasons, namely, to weaken Teheran. On the other hand, few seem to have taken into account Saddam Hussein's ambitions and appetite for regional hegemony, both of which required large-scale acquisitions and build-ups. Rather than revisit the issue, the point here is that the Iraqi military capability was far more advanced than many assumed and, secondarily, that despite U.N. inspections, Baghdad maintained a capability to restart many of these programs if the leadership chose to do so. For further details on the U.S. participation in the build-up, see Douglas Frantz and Murray Waas, "Bush Secret Effort Helped Iraq Build Its War Machine," *The Los Angeles Times*, 23 February 1992, pp. A1, A12; *idem*, "Bush Had Long History of Support for Iraq Aid," *The Los Angeles Times*, 24 February 1992, pp. A1.

of the more surprising revelations following the conflict was the scale of Iraq's military programs, which had ranged from a vast conventional capability to high-scale efforts in the development of nuclear, biological, and chemical arsenals.

Although Iraq's military reconstruction over the next few years will be severely curtailed, especially if international arms merchants can be restrained in their sales to Iraq, Baghdad's military strategy cannot be divorced from regional developments. If conservative Arab Gulf regimes forge closer ties with Iran, then Iraq, irrespective of who is in power, will certainly strive to influence that process. Similarly, if the GCC states establish closer alliances, bilaterally or collectively, with outside powers, Baghdad will once again perceive a southern threat to its national security. Finally, if Iran emerges as the sole superpower in the Persian Gulf region, Iraq is ideally positioned to see its regional rehabilitation accelerated. In short, Iraq retains a strategic position in the Gulf region, one which is inherent given its size, location, and political ambitions.

Iraq's Role in the Gulf Region

Aware of its immense potential, Iraq has sought to rebuild its shattered Arab bridges. Prime Minister Hammadi announced on 25 April 1991 that Iraq wanted to restore relations with its Arab opponents during the war and promised to cooperate with Saudi Arabia in OPEC affairs. He further stated that coalition state companies would not be automatically excluded from reconstruction contract biddings when sanctions were lifted.⁷⁸ Interestingly, Hammadi ruled out closer ties with Iran and Turkey because of their interference in Iraqi internal affairs. These two countries, he said, undermined Iraqi attempts to improve relations even as the prime minister declared that Iraq was looking "to the future, [was] ready to apologize, to turn over a page, and to be concerned with the future, not the past."⁷⁹ This was a major declaration and even though Hammadi was eventually sacked, such statements could not have been made without prior discussions with Saddam Hussein and other RCC members.

A12, A13; and *idem*, "U.S. Loans Indirectly Financed Iraq Military," *The Los Angeles Times*, 25 February 1992, pp. A1, A10, A11.

⁷⁸"Hammadi Holds News Conference," FBIS-NES-91-081, 26 April 1991, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 12.

For his part, Saddam Hussein restricted his Id al-Fitr (the major holiday marking the end of an atonement and fasting period) message on 15 April 1991 to his supporters, namely, Jordan, Yemen, Algeria, Sudan, Tunisia, and Libya. The only non-Arab states mentioned in the speech were the Maldives and Indonesia.⁸⁰ However, Saddam Hussein also received a message from Sultan Qaboos of Oman.⁸¹ The mere fact that a GCC ruler responded and congratulated his "brother" on this occasion was a major development. It was another milestone for Baghdad as Qaboos appreciated the critical importance of maintaining a balance of power between Iran and Iraq in the area. If nothing else, Saddam Hussein's actions forced Arab Gulf rulers to shake off their notorious complacency and, led by King Fahd, they have hardened their positions and are now seeking to contain Iraqi ambitions in the Gulf region.

⁸⁰"Saddam Greets Arab, Muslim Leaders on Holiday," *FBIS-NES-91-072*, 15 April 1991, p. 21.

⁸¹"Omani Sultan Sends Congratulations," *FBIS-NES-91-075*, 18 April 1991, p. 13.

Chapter Three

SAUDI ARABIA: AN EMERGING POWER

When Kuwait was invaded, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia placed its legitimacy on the line and, when faced with daunting choices, including the possibility of an Iraqi invasion, called the United States and other powers to uphold its security and territorial integrity (see Figure 3.1). This decision was one of the most difficult reached by the al-Saud ruling family because of its long-term consequences. More than anything else, the Saudi decision contributed to the disarray of the Middle East, committed the Saudis to an assertive path, and guaranteed their pro-Western penchant for the foreseeable future. All of these will invariably introduce some degree of instability in the kingdom as pressures mount on the ruling al-Saud family. Despite these internal constraints, Riyadh has embarked on a multifaceted national security policy aimed at strengthening its political and military position in the Gulf region as well as enhancing its role within the Muslim world.

INTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

The War for Kuwait split the Muslim world. Saddam Hussein intensified the split when he declared holy war against the U.S.-led international coalition forces deployed in Saudi Arabia. It was heresy, he argued, to permit infidel forces to take charge of Holy Makkah and Madinah. Even if his pronouncements lacked sincerity, and no Western forces were deployed to or near the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah, the argument was persuasive to many Muslims be-

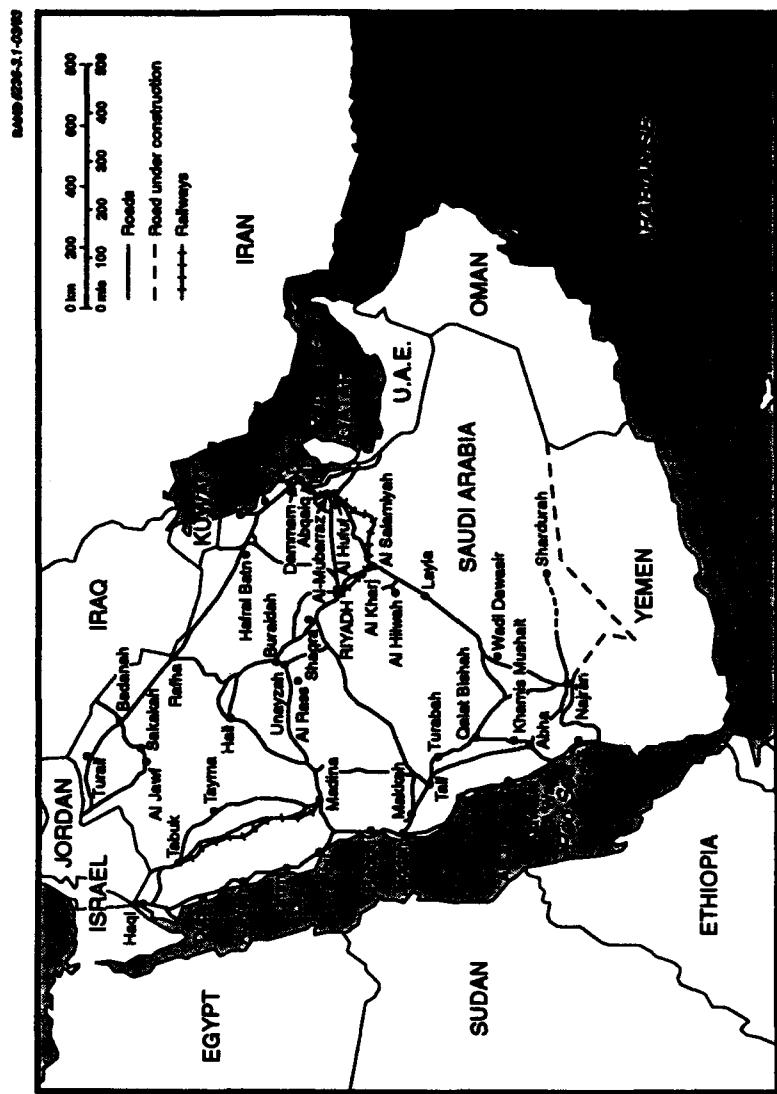


Figure 3.1—Saudi Arabia

SOURCE: "Saudi Arabia: Country Profile," The Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 1991-92, p. 19.

cause of existing tensions within the Muslim world.¹ Hussein's secularist record damaged his plan, despite the publication in 1980 of a clever family tree tracing his lineage back to the Prophet Muhammad.²

The Saudis were more successful at garnering religious legitimacy for their position. In September 1990, they summoned religious dignitaries to a Muslim World League meeting in Makkah. The 400-man gathering bestowed its theological blessings on the Saudi invitation to non-Muslim forces to enter Saudi Arabia, but added that they "should leave the region" once "the causes for their presence were removed."³ The conference was ridiculed in Iran as a failed bid to "alter the facts of Islam." In Algeria, Tunisia, and Sudan, religious leaders came out strongly for Iraq, chastising their leaders for insincere double-speak. Elsewhere, religious leaders were "being tugged in several unhappy directions all at the same time," as Saudi Arabia and Iraq struggled to earn their legitimizing support.⁴

None of this was actually *threatening* to the al-Saud ruling family because of the absence of a credible alternative inside Saudi Arabia. Unlike poorer Arab countries, Saudi Arabia did not face the problem of volatile masses, nor did it have to contend with an organized opposition. The exception was Shia Muslims in the Eastern Province. Elements of Saudi Shias were successfully contained during the 1980s through a combination of astute financial "investments" and a

¹Iraq summoned 350 Muslim leaders to attend a 9 January 1991 conference in Baghdad "to draw up a strategy for Islamic action to face aggression once there is military action against Iraq." When few delegates accepted, partly because the three-day conference was scheduled so close to the U.N. deadline of 15 January 1991 and partly because of Saudi pressure on would-be delegates, the meeting was called off. Nevertheless, Baghdad was seeking a religious mantle to intimidate Muslim leaders. See Patrick E. Tyler, "Iraq Summons Muslims for Conference on Jan. 9," *The New York Times*, 31 December 1990, p. A9.

²For a reproduction of the family tree in Arabic, see Amir Iskandar, *Saddam Hussein: Munadilan Wa Musakiran wa Insanan* [Saddam Hussein: Advocate, Thinker and Humanist], Paris: Hachette, 1980, p. 21.

³"Islamic Conference Issues Resolutions," FBIS-NES-90-178, 13 September 1990, pp. 3-5.

⁴"Islam Divided: Purse-Strings and Prayer," *The Economist*, 22 September 1990, pp. 47-48.

systematic policy of repression by state security forces.⁵ To be sure, the Saudi internal situation was relatively stable, compared to that in neighboring states. But the crisis highlighted Riyadh's vulnerabilities which, in turn, would affect its ability to assert regional influence. By siding with the West, the al-Saud ruling family recognized challenges to its authority and geared to confront its opponents.⁶

Disenchantment with the Ruling Family

Except for a brief period of political instability in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the al-Saud ruling family has successfully maintained the delicate 1744 religio-political alliance sown with the al-Shaykh.⁷ Opposition to this alliance, although isolated in nature and substance, has occurred periodically throughout the years. More recently, opposition to the alliance as well as the al-Saud's total "monopoly" of power has increased. In fact, the political debate that accompanied the military build-up to the War for Kuwait energized the middle class to press for more reforms and catapulted the intelligentsia—both secular and religious—to articulate specific positions. Under the circumstances, all groups in the kingdom expected King Fahd to introduce political, social, and economic reforms, insisting all along that the ruler should give preference to their "correct" agendas.⁸

⁵Abd al-Rahman al-Shaykh, Salih al-Dakhil, and Abd Allah al-Zayr, *Intifadat al-Minteqa al-Sharqiyya* [The Intifada in the Eastern Province], London: Munazzamat al-Thawra al-Islamiyya fi al-Jazirat al-Arabiyya, 1981; see also James Dorsey, "Saudi Minority Sect Is Restive," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 20 February 1980, p. 8.

⁶By necessity, Riyadh's mood was assertive in the summer of 1990, since so much was at stake. But there was a clear understanding as well regarding fundamental political changes under way. The leadership responded by accepting challenges emanating from the religious and secular establishments. See David Pike, "Testing Times for the Saudi Rulers," *MEED* 34:33, 24 August 1990, p. 10.

⁷David Holden and Richard Johns, *The House of Saud: The Rise and Rule of the Most Powerful Dynasty in the Arab World*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981, pp. 1-8.

⁸A series of letters, presented as petitions, was addressed to King Fahd starting in December 1990. Although the ruler brushed aside some that fell in the "open" category, others, especially those bearing the signatures of religious figures, could not be ignored. A more detailed analysis follows but it is worth noting at this juncture that modern telecommunications played a critical role in the distribution of these docu-

For conservative Saudis, both liberal and Islamist positions were problematic, even if no one challenged the authority of the al-Saud. Still, recognition of the need for the establishment of a majlis al-shura (consultative council) was universal.⁹ The 500 conservative judges, professors, and religious scholars "demanded" that King Fahd accelerate the implementation of often promised political changes, starting with the majlis al-shura which, in their words, would "decide on internal and foreign affairs" in "accordance with the Islamic Sharia [Law]."¹⁰ The liberal petitioners had made similar "requests," in December 1990, but the tone of their letter was quite different. Not only did they laud the al-Saud for their magnanimity, they acknowledged that the ruling family was a symbol of loyalty and a focus of unity in Saudi Arabia. They did ask that the government curb some of the freedoms granted the mutawayyin (religious police) as the latter's zeal in enforcing social norms bordered on the invasive. The liberals also asked that a greater role be given to women in the country's future social and economic policies.¹¹

In contrast to the "liberal" December 1990 petition, which was issued to encourage the Saudi government down the path of reform, the May Islamist letter espoused a decidedly fundamentalist tone. This petition carried the signature of about 100 senior Saudi religious dignitaries, including that of Shaykh Abd-al-Aziz bin Baz, the most influential Saudi theologian. These dignitaries called for even more Islamization than already existed in areas as diverse as the military, the press, and all administrative and educational systems. It "demanded" the closure of the "corrupt press," a crackdown on all those who "enrich[ed] themselves by illegal means, without any exception on ground of rank" (a clear reference to members of the ruling family), and a reform of the kingdom's embassies abroad. It

ments. With the widespread availability of telefax machines, several "letters" received a wide distribution around the world, further complicating matters for King Fahd.

⁹"Memorandum Presented to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia by Religious Scholars, Judges and University Professors" (in Arabic) (n.p., n.d.), 2 pages [in author's hands]. A version of this letter, although not identical, was published by the Egyptian daily *Al-Sha'b*. See "Intellectuals Demand Reforms in Letter to King," FBIS-NES-91-100, 23 May 1991, pp. 21-22. See also "A Memorandum to the King" (in Arabic) (n.p., December 1990), 4 pages [in author's hands].

¹⁰FBIS text, *ibid.*, p. 21.

¹¹"A Memorandum to the King," *op. cit.*, p. 2.

touched on the issue of Saudi arms procurement, arguing for a more diversified buying policy. On the question of foreign policy the petition stressed that Saudi Arabia's Islamic purity should be maintained through noninvolvement in non-Islamic pacts and treaties.¹²

Riyadh reacted swiftly to this second petition. Interior Ministry personnel reportedly visited leading signatories to warn them against further potential activities. Some were allegedly banned from foreign travel. On 3 June 1991, "the government's Higher Judicial Council issued a warning against the consequences of any future attempt to put pressure on the Saudi government by the publication and distribution of petitions lodged with the King."¹³ It was ironic, of course, that this warning should emanate from the Higher Judicial Council, since its creation within the Ministry of Justice stood as a direct institutional challenge to the judicial powers of the ulama (learned men in Islamic law). Indeed, the petition specifically called for the standardization of all "judicial establishments, granting them real and total independence, extending the judiciary's authority over everyone, and forming an independent body whose task [was] to follow up implementation of judicial rulings."¹⁴ This demand was, for all practical purposes, a call to establish an independent Supreme Judiciary Council, one that would be outside the realm of the Ministry of Justice. If created, it would hold everyone, including members of the al-Saud ruling family, accountable to Sharia law.

Far from being intimidated by the government's attempts to silence its members, the council of the official board of senior Islamic scholars issued a "clarification" statement, while condemning all unauthorized duplications of the original letter. This clarification statement maintained the right of Muslim citizens to advise and counsel their leaders but stressed that this had to be done in confidence and without any intention of instigating others.¹⁵

¹²"The Fundamentalist Lobby Pleads Its Case," *Country Report for Saudi Arabia* (hereafter, CR-SA), No. 3, London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1991, p. 7.

¹³"Intellectuals Demand Reforms," *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵Saudi Arabia: Fax and Opinions," *The Economist*, 15 June 1991, pp. 40-41.

There was little doubt that Riyadh was annoyed by this. Senior al-Saud family members openly chastised this newly discovered appetite for endless political diatribes, calling for restraints and warning of severe consequences. But by freely exhibiting their annoyance, Saudi officials vouched for the authenticity of the petitions as documents genuinely representing Saudi opinion. Rumors that the government had concocted the whole debate between reformers and conservatives as a carefully stage-managed exercise for both domestic and foreign consumption, "to demonstrate the constraints preventing any departure from the status quo," failed to win much support.¹⁶ In fact the fundamentalist pressure has grown considerably since 1991; in addition to known centers of fundamentalism in the clergy and the universities, more evidence emerged indicating that a substantial proportion of the armed forces was coming under fundamentalist influence.¹⁷ Moreover, the Islamist petition called for the creation of a "strong, comprehensive army equipped with weapons from various sources," to "defend the country and its holy places."¹⁸ It may well have been that the vision was to emulate the Prophet's armies, an idea that would strike a chord in the ranks.

The Mutawwayin Dimension

The growing problems the al-Saud faced from the fundamentalist community took on added urgency as reports of harassment by the mutawwa (enforcers of religious behavior) increased in number. Unconfirmed reports even alleged that younger members of the ruling family were not spared in this crackdown. Rumors of distur-

¹⁶"—Leaving the Domestic Political Balance in Doubt," CR-SA 3-91, p. 7.

¹⁷This is one of, if not the, least understood and most sensitive topics in Saudi Arabia. Given the aura of secrecy and discretion surrounding the military in the kingdom, it is difficult to ascertain with even a minimum degree of certainty how widespread fundamentalist forces may be within the ranks. Suffice it to say that the armed forces were not shielded from the public at large to keep them immune from fundamental changes in society. Moreover, the background of the armed forces was ingrained in the famous Ikhwan forces, which united the tribes of Arabia largely under the banner of Islam. For essential background, see John S. Habib, *Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam: The Ikhwan of Najd and Their Role in the Creation of the Saudi Kingdom, 1910-1930*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978; see also Mordechai Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era: Regime and Elites; Conflict and Collaboration*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988.

¹⁸"Memorandum presented to King Fahd," *op. cit.*, p. 2.

bances in Buraidah, northwest of Riyadh, implied that a protest march on the governor's palace was held in July 1991 to complain about a decision to ban a particularly popular cleric from delivering his weekly sermon. Although impossible to verify, the frequency with which these reports circulated suggested that not all were fabrications. More recent developments involving mutawwa force lend credibility to many of these earlier reports.

According to the *Jordan Times*, Riyadh city officials apparently authorized the "arrest of hundreds of religious police in the capital after they marched to the Palace of Prince Salman, governor of Riyadh, to protest being banned from the al-Shulah shopping area." Earlier, mutawwa were also banned by Prince Mash'al, the owner of the center, after "they simply got out of hand."¹⁹ Increasingly embarrassed by Western complaints of harassment in the kingdom, which hosted nearly five million foreigners in 1991, the authorities confiscated many trademark GMC trucks, which the mutawwa use to patrol the streets and enforce strict adherence to Islamic law. According to this report, demonstrators were warned that they would be arrested before they set out to march in front of Prince Salman's palace. Several protestors were allegedly killed when palace guards opened fire on the mutawwa.

By opposing the mutawwayin, Saudi Arabia broke with its tradition of bland self-assurance. King Fahd admitted that forces were at work that threatened the country's social stability and declared that he would resort to other measures if the situation became intolerable. When he spoke of his concerns, Fahd was addressing Muslim scholars at his regular diwan (public forum) on 28 January 1992. The king referred to an imam (religious scholar) accused of intolerance as an example of his concerns. In this instance, a 40-year old imam was sacked in December 1991 on the ground that he "insult[ed] the leader of a Saudi women's association," advising women not to apply for positions of responsibility as such posts were un-Islamic.²⁰ Diplomatic sources claimed that the imam was administered 80

¹⁹"Special from Riyadh," *Jordan Times*, 12 February 1992, pp. 1, 5, in "Sources Confirm Crackdown on Religious Police," *FEIS-NES-92-029*, 12 February 1992, pp. 21-23.

²⁰"Preachers Warned Against 'Excessive Behavior': Cleric Flogged for Insulting Women," *FEIS-NES-92-021*, 31 January 1992, pp. 33-34.

lashes and banned from further preaching. About 20 other clerics were arrested in January 1992 for insisting that Saudi Arabia should adhere more strictly to Islamic principles in foreign and domestic policies.²¹ The king took other clerics to task for criticizing government policies.

Earlier, the offending imams addressed a memorandum to Abd-al-Aziz bin Baz in which they objected to Saudi participation in the Middle East peace talks. They claimed it signified a departure from the idea of a holy war against Israel. The clerics also endorsed the policies of the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front and those of the Iranian government.²² The king rejected the memorandum and criticized the clerics for questioning the government's integrity. He also condemned clandestine gatherings and the dissemination of "lies and false rumors" on cassettes. Opposition judges were singled out for monitoring and at least one senior religious scholar, Shaykh Abd al-Muhsin al-Ubaykan, a judge and preacher who presided over Sharia Court A in Riyadh, was dismissed. The dismissal decision was reached by the Higher Judicial Council headed by Justice Minister Shaykh Abd-Allah Bin-Jubayr. Although no public reasons were advanced for the dismissal, Saudi sources claimed that al-Ubaykan opposed the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia and criticized government policies from his pulpit.²³

The pro-Palestinian London-based *Al-Quds Al-'Arabi* reported in early January 1992 that Saudi authorities launched a large-scale arrest campaign in the ranks of mosque preachers and imams to punish them for antigovernment sermons. The majority of those arrested were in the Riyadh and al-Qasim areas. Islamic sources revealed that most criticisms were focused on proliferating usury, the lack of Islamic banks in Saudi Arabia, assertions that the country was throwing itself into the lap of the United States, the omission of the word "jihad" from the Dakar Islamic summit statement, and the Kingdom's support for negotiations with Israel as well as its agree-

²¹"20 Arrested for 'Extremist' Stands," *FBIS-NES-92-021*, 31 January 1992, p. 34.

²²Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudi King Takes on Islamic Militants," *The New York Times*, 30 January 1992, p. A3.

²³"Judge Dismissed for Opposing U.S. Presence," *FBIS-NES-92-023*, 4 February 1992, pp. 24-25.

ment to participate in the Moscow regional multilateral negotiations in late January 1992.²⁴

According to the newspaper, Riyadh airport security authorities prevented Shaykh Salman al-Awdah, lecturer at the Imam Muhammad Bin Saud University in Baridah and one of the most renowned preachers in the kingdom, from leaving the country. His passport was confiscated on his return from a visit to the United Arab Emirates, where he delivered a lecture entitled "Liberating the Homelands or Liberating the Human Beings?" Shaykh al-Awdah, accompanied by Shaykh Abd al-Wahhab al-Turayri, was on his way to the United States at the invitation of the Arab Muslim Students' Union when his departure was blocked. Only Shaykh al-Turayri was permitted to travel.²⁵

The government's strong measures against the mutawwayin (enforcers of religious behavior) and members of the religious establishment were accompanied by renewed promises to introduce constitutional changes to ensure that rule was based on more consent. A majlis al-shura was to be set up and more powers given to local administrators; moreover, there would be more consultation between rulers and ruled in regular diwans (forums) where ordinary people would be able to vent their grievances. The king, however, did not call for the establishment of a multiparty system.²⁶

On 1 March 1992, Fahd issued a series of decrees speeding the establishment of a new constitution for Saudi Arabia, aimed at decentralizing power and establishing a bill of rights while not

²⁴Among the preachers arrested were: Shaykh Abd al-Rahman al-Salumi (Najran), Shaykh Mashari al-Zayidi (Riyadh), Shaykh Ibrahim al-Hisan (Riyadh), Shaykh Abd al-Karim al-Hisan (Riyadh), Shaykh Ali al-Khudayri (Riyadh), Shaykh Ibrahim al-Id (Riyadh), Shaykh Abdallah al-Utaybi (Riyadh), Shaykh Fahd Abd al-Aziz al-Yahya (Riyadh), Shaykh Nasir al-Barrak (al-Bukayriyah-al-Qasim), Shaykh Ibrahim al-Khazim (al-Dawwamah), Shaykh Abd al-Malik al-Rayyis (paralyzed-Riyadh) and Shaykh Muhammad al-Asfur (Riyadh). See "Large-Scale Arrest Campaign in Saudi Arabia Embracing Mosque Preachers Who Condemned Government's Policy," *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, 11-12 January 1992, p. 1, in "Authorities Round Up Dissident Imams, Preachers," *FBIS-NES-92-011*, 16 January 1992, pp. 24-25.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 25.

²⁶Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudis Ready a Council Intended to Loosen a Closed Society," *The New York Times*, 25 February 1992, p. A5.

threatening to weaken the al-Saud rule over the kingdom.²⁷ The centerpiece of the new program was the creation of a 61-man majlis al-shura which would advise the ruler and openly discuss policy matters affecting the country. Under the new regulations, Saudi Arabia's 14 provincial governors would also acquire additional autonomy in setting priorities on spending and development at the local and regional levels. Governors would work with local consultative councils, each composed of 10 citizens, to meet local and regional needs more specifically. The 10 council members were to be appointed by the governors themselves in consultation with the interior minister.

Most interestingly, King Fahd's initiatives revised the process by which a future ruler would be chosen to govern Saudi Arabia. If these decisions were accepted by senior members of the al-Saud family without emendations, rulers would be chosen by the equivalent of an electoral college composed of al-Saud princes. Moreover, the king would retain the right to appoint or dismiss the Crown Prince, who would lose his "automatic" succession right under this scheme. Since King Fahd issued a simultaneous decree confirming Crown Prince Abdallah as the heir to the throne, this particular clause of the constitution would enter into effect after Abdallah ruled. But the real effect of this dramatic rule was the expansion of the pool from which the next Saudi monarch may be chosen. Thus, the succession test would only come after Abdallah, and it was too early to ascertain whether Defense Minister Sultan would forgo an opportunity if the electoral college decided to appoint another prince.²⁸

Still, significant changes were under way in the kingdom, promising to alter the traditional al-Saud political discourse. To be sure, internal constraints existed, creating potential problems for Fahd and his brothers. But the senior princes had mastered the art of compromise and corrective measures. What concerned them most, however, was the knowledge that their successors, who were bound to face far

²⁷Kim Murphy, "Saudi King Announces Reforms," *The Los Angeles Times*, 2 March 1992, pp. A1, A7; for the documents, see John Bulloch, *Reforms of the Saudi Arabian Constitution*, London: Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies, April 1992.

²⁸Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudi King Issues Decrees to Revise Governing System," *The New York Times*, 2 March 1992, pp. A1, A5.

more critical challenges, may not be able to adapt fast enough. It was largely for this reason that Fahd and his senior advisors were institutionalizing processes aimed at ensuring, at least in the short term, their hold on authority.

Succession

Saudi Arabia's political stability has been put to the test on numerous occasions since the state was founded in 1932.²⁹ The most significant constitutional crisis came in 1958 when King Saud was forced to turn over his authority in foreign affairs, internal policy, and finance to his brother Crown Prince Faysal. In 1964, the struggle for power culminated with Faysal's accession to the throne when the ulama declared that Saud, "unable to carry out the affairs of the state," should step down. On 2 November 1964, the Council of Ministers and the kingdom's ulama deposed Saud and proclaimed Faysal king.³⁰

Assassinated on 25 March 1975, King Faysal was succeeded by Prince Khalid, who appointed his half-brother, Fahd, crown prince and first deputy prime minister. This reshuffling at the top restored the balance between the Juluwi and Sudayri branches of the al-Saud family. Faysal's assassination, described as an isolated act perpetrated by a "deranged" young man, raised serious intra-family disagreements to the surface. In particular, these included clan differences, sympathy among younger princes for opposition religious groups, and financial competition. While internal family conflicts received little or no publicity in Saudi Arabia, disputes were frequent. That was not to suggest, however, that such conflicts were rampant, only that senior members of the ruling family disagreed over crucial issues. In fact,

²⁹There is a rich literature examining all of the different facets of Saudi political life since 1932. For background materials, see Holden and Johns, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-527; and Ayman Al-Yassini, *Religion and State in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985. There is precious little on succession, however, and what follows is a cursory look at its most crucial facets.

³⁰Gerald De Gaury, *Faisal: King of Saudi Arabia*, New York and Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966, pp. 89-109. For a fascinating look at the role of the Council of Ministers, see Summer Scott Huyette, *Political Adaptation in Saudi Arabia: A Study of the Council of Ministers*, Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985, especially pp. 49-83.

these disagreements were frequently brushed aside, to face even larger challenges to the kingdom's internal stability.

Perhaps the gravest challenge to the Al-Saud authority occurred in 1979 with the takeover of the Makkah Holy Mosque.³¹ The ordeal in Islam's holiest city created tension in the kingdom, forced an internal reassessment within the al-Saud family, and planted the seeds for drastic new measures. But it also allowed King Khalid to widen his rule. Indeed, Khalid embarked on an unprecedented mediation trip to accommodate dissent and control the sociopolitical damage created by the mosque takeover.³²

Khalid died in June 1982. Crown Prince Fahd was declared king within a matter of hours. Abdallah became crown prince and first deputy prime minister, and Sultan second in line of succession as well as second deputy prime minister. This lineup has remained in place since then.

Although the agreed-upon succession mechanism was implemented to the letter and everyone seemed satisfied with the outcome, the struggle for power within the royal family did not disappear. Crown Prince Abdallah, for example, refused to surrender his command of the National Guard in 1982. In this respect, the precedent set by Fahd when he left the Interior Ministry upon assuming the crown principeship in 1975 was not respected. Abdallah, therefore, violated the understanding that the crown prince would not hold a cabinet or military portfolio. Abdallah viewed this compact quite differently. He reminded his brothers that Fahd enjoyed more powers than he would as crown prince, because an ailing King Khalid had essentially turned over most of the throne's functions to him. With an able monarch in power, argued Abdallah, the crown prince would once again assume a minimal role with little if any authority attached to his position. Moreover, there were numerous rumors that the

³¹Joseph A. Kechichian, "The Role of the Ulama in the Politics of an Islamic State: The Case of Saudi Arabia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18:1, February 1986, pp. 53-71; *idem*, "Islamic Revivalism and Change in Saudi Arabia: Juhayman Utalbi's 'Letters' to the Saudi People," *The Muslim World* 70:1, January 1990, pp. 1-6.

³²James Dorsey, "After Mecca, Saudi Rulers Provide a Channel for Dissent," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 March 1980, p. 7.

Sudayri faction within the ruling al-Saud family wanted to replace Abdallah with one of their own, Prince Sultan, as Fahd's successor.³³

Unconfirmed reports of rifts within the ruling family surfaced again in 1991, illustrating internal differences of opinion among senior members. In one instance, Muhammad al-Fasi, a brother-in-law of Prince Turki (one of King Fahd's six full brothers) was placed under house arrest in Saudi Arabia after being taken there quietly from Amman, Jordan, in November 1991. His arrest would not have drawn much attention were it not for Prince Turki's involvement. The dispute within the family was over the ways of dealing with Iraq and took place before the war to oust Iraq from Kuwait started. Although the story is difficult to substantiate, Jordanian sources claimed that al-Fasi visited Baghdad on behalf of Prince Turki, who was unhappy with coalition plans. Turki wanted to warn Saddam Hussein of the impending catastrophe and, when he could not travel personally, dispatched his brother-in-law to represent him. Al-Fasi visited Baghdad, where he met with high-ranking Iraqi officials and took to the airwaves to denounce allied war aims. Fearing for his safety were he to return to the kingdom, he returned to Amman from where he was "moved" to Riyadh after Jordan mended its differences with Saudi Arabia.³⁴

NATIONAL SECURITY POLICIES IN THE 1990s

In 1992 Saudi Arabia was one of the few states to retain an absolute monarchy. Its national security policies, which were charted by the kingdom's first ruler, emphasized diplomacy within the realm of Islam. This emphasis remained in place throughout the past several decades despite exponential increases in arms purchases. However, there were new aspects of Saudi national security policies. In the

³³Abir, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-218.

³⁴Muhammad al-Fasi's colorful record was his own worst handicap. Several years ago, he was involved in a few real-estate embarrassments in Beverly Hills, California, and Miami, Florida, generating damaging publicity. At the time, he was rebuked by King Fahd for his eccentricities. More recently, however, his case drew attention in the U.S. media, when F. Lee Bailey, al-Fasi's Florida attorney, ran full-page ads in major American newspapers calling for his liberation. See "Who Are These People? What Do They Want? Who Is Behind Them?" *The New York Times*, 14 February 1992, p. A20.

aftermath of the War for Kuwait, Riyadh displayed a vigorous and unabashed readiness to adopt policies in pursuit of its perceived national interests. Saudi Arabia's tone indicated a shift in policies emphasizing a more assertive regional outlook, part of which entailed a massive new weapons acquisition program.

MILITARIZATION

The War for Kuwait highlighted the military imbalance among the states of the Gulf region. GCC leaders insisted they would never again be in a weak and vulnerable position comparable to that during July and August of 1990. The need to defend oneself was made amply clear and every GCC state intended to see to it that its security was preserved. The Saudis argued that their past investments paid off handsomely, proving to wary critics that defense expenditures were an insurance policy worth having. Riyadh's policy of military modernization was, at the very least, vindicated by the success of the war.³⁵

According to a June 1990 Congressional Research Service (CRS) report, arms transfer agreements with Saudi Arabia reached \$57 billion between 1983–1990. Iraq, which was fighting Iran throughout the 1980s, signed agreements worth \$30 billion during this period.³⁶ In the wake of the war, Riyadh and its partners have solicited additional arms. The Bush Administration presented Congress with multiple proposals for new weapons, to be balanced by new transfers to Israel to maintain the latter's qualitative edge.

Even before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Washington sought Congressional approval for a \$4 billion plan to sell Saudi Arabia 1,117 light armored vehicles, 2,000 TOW antitank missiles, and 27 155-millimeter howitzers. In late August 1990, a \$2.2 billion crisis package was announced: 24 F-15 fighters, 160 M-60A3 tanks, 200 Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, and 1,500 powerful but nonnuclear depleted-ura-

³⁵A discussion of the merits of the war is beyond the scope of this research effort, which aims to examine internal dynamics in the Arab Gulf states; however, the consequences of the war for Saudi Arabia and the smaller Arab Gulf states are addressed, as these may be relevant to the region's security makeup.

³⁶Kathleen C. Bailey, "Arms Control for the Middle East," *International Defense Review* 24:4, April 1991, pp. 311–314.

nium antitank shells. A third package, which included 60 additional F-15C/D aircraft, was proposed in September, bringing the total sales to \$20 billion.³⁷ Presumably, a majority of these items were to be drawn from the active U.S. arsenal. In September 1990, Washington proposed yet another round of transfers to the Saudis: 385 M1A2 tanks and 400 Bradley Fighting Vehicles—the top of the line in U.S. armor—along with thousands of bombs and night vision devices. Other sales were announced in 1991 and 1992.

Riyadh ordered 12 Patriot missile batteries, with 758 missiles, radar sets, control and launching stations, and other support equipment in mid-1991 (\$3.3 billion). The administration submitted to Congress yet another arms sales package for Saudi Arabia, worth \$473 million, in the spring of 1991. Under the terms of the new deal, a contract to supply 2,300 "Humvee" jeeps at a cost of \$123 million was to be fulfilled from U.S. stocks left in the kingdom following the war. The larger \$350 million part of the new deal involved Boeing supplying training and support services for the five aircraft in the kingdom's AWACS fleet. At the same time, Harsco sold Riyadh 5,900 five-ton military trucks under an arms deal approved by Congress in September 1990.³⁸ In August 1991, the Bush Administration added a \$365 million package of munitions for the RSAF, which included parts for laser-guided bombs, 2,000 MK-48 bombs, 2,100 cluster bombs, and 700 AIM-7M Sparrow radar-guided air-to-air missiles. The sale passed through Congress unopposed at the end of August, and brought to \$10.8 billion the total value of U.S. arms to the kingdom since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Other contracts were signed to supply upgrade kits for F-15 engines, radars, printed circuit boards, and tactical radios for tanks, helicopters, and light armored vehicles.³⁹ In the fall of 1992, a \$9 billion package for 72 F-15XP aircraft equipped with 900 AGM-65D/G Maverick missiles, 300 AIM-9S, and 300 AIM-7M air-to-air missiles, as well as other support equipment, was initiated.⁴⁰

³⁷"Emergency Weapons for Saudi Arabia," *Military Technology*, December 1990, p. 7.

³⁸"U.S. Announces Phase One of Arms Package," *MEED* 34:40, 12 October 1990, p. 21.

³⁹"U.S. Arms Sales Continue," *CR-SA* 4-91, p. 13.

⁴⁰"Factfile—New World Orders: U.S. Arms Transfers to the Middle East," *Arms Control Today*, September 1992, p. 36; see also Anthony H. Cordesman, "Saudi F-15

A clear trend regarding the future military objectives of Saudi Arabia was discernible in these acquisitions. In fact, Riyadh was unabashed in its search for sophisticated weapons systems after the high-tech performance of coalition forces against Iraq, despite absorption problems. This was made clear in Saudi Arabia's purchases of non-U.S. weapons systems as well. The kingdom sought British, French, and Italian assistance in this area, building on its successful 1986 Al-Yamamah I project with London.⁴¹ Although that program was originally slated to include \$8.5 billion worth of Tornado fighter-bombers and Hawk trainer aircraft, it increased into a variety of projects worth approximately \$60 billion for the British.⁴²

Other Western arms suppliers also displayed a keen interest in military sales. The British were eager to sell additional Tornados and Hawks and the Saudis were willing to buy. In late October 1991, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to Washington, told the London *Times* that Saudi Arabia expected to spend some \$25 billion on orders from Britain over the next five years within the framework of the Al-Yamamah II accords. In a bid to consolidate French hold over Saudi naval procurement, Paris proposed five separate offset projects, even though their most recent \$3 billion arms package was still unsigned in late 1992. The French Sawari II program would presumably involve the transfer of three frigates with a commitment to reinvest 35 percent of the deal's technical value in the kingdom. The other four projects in the Sawari II offset program included investments in agro-industry, chemicals, heavy industries, and electronics.⁴³

At about the same time these large sales were announced, King Fahd pledged to increase the size of Saudi Arabia's armed forces. In his Id al-Fitr (end of atonement and fasting month) address, Fahd con-

Sale Will Preserve the Balance in the Gulf," *Armed Forces Journal International* 130:4, November 1992, pp. 31-36.

⁴¹One of the largest British military contracts, the original \$8.5 billion Al-Yamamah project, was signed in 1986 for the sale of, among other items, Tornado bombers. For details, see "Defence: A MEED Special Report," *MEED* 36: 19, 15 May 1992, pp. 11-16.

⁴²David C. Morrison, "Mideast Lining Up for Arms," *National Journal*, 5 September 1990, p. 2201.

⁴³—But UK Arms Contractors Are Not Downhearted," and "The French Are Standing By with Offset Proposals," *CR-SA* 4-91, pp. 13-14.

firmed his decision to embark on a major military manpower expansion.⁴⁴ As Fahd stated:

Regarding the building of the Armed Forces, the main lesson to be learned from the Gulf crisis and the experience of our forces, which did extremely well, and out of the reality in which we live today, *we in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have made a decisive decision to immediately embark on expanding and strengthening our Armed Forces*, providing them with the most effective and most advanced land, sea, and air weapons the world has produced as well as advanced military and technical equipment. We will, God willing, work toward raising the level of efficiency of our men in the Armed Forces in the various fields, doubling efforts in regard to conscription to meet the required needs for defending the dear homeland and warding off [enemies] from its waters and land.⁴⁵

This was the most succinct and explicit pronouncement ever issued by Riyadh about its longer-term defense goals. It was also clear that options discussed before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, including a doubling of the standing army as well as the purchase of the necessary hardware to equip new recruits, had been formally included in Saudi expenditure plans.⁴⁶

Prince Khaled bin Sultan bin Abd-al-Aziz, the Saudi commander of all Arab forces during Operation Desert Storm, asserted that Riyadh required at least eight divisions to guard Saudi Arabia's extremely lengthy land borders. Including reservists, Khaled envisaged an army which would number around 200,000 troops, nearly triple its present size.⁴⁷ Riyadh was thinking in terms of similar levels of expansion for its air and sea forces.

The Saudi government was apparently persuaded that it needed to increase its military forces to preserve its territorial integrity. Moreover, it was also willing to adopt a higher military profile, as well

⁴⁴"King Fahd Speaks on War Outcome, Government," FBIS-NES-91-073, 16 April 1991, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 11, emphasis added.

⁴⁶"King Fahd Pledges Increase in Size of Armed Forces," CR-SA 2-91, p. 10.

⁴⁷Judith Miller, "Saudi General Sees No Need for Big American Presence," *The New York Times*, 29 April 1991, p. A9.

as limit its reliance on Western powers. The latter were equally convinced of the need to preposition large stocks of hardware in the region. It was not clear, however, whether a major build-up of the Saudi military was demographically feasible.⁴⁸

Pledges to increase the size of the armed forces and to introduce conscription were delayed by internal debates. Defense minister Sultan stated that there was no need for conscription in the kingdom after all. During a visit to the King Faisal air base in June 1991, Sultan claimed that the rush of "volunteers to enlist in the Saudi armed forces exceeded the capacity of military training centers to absorb them."⁴⁹ Although the prince's comments were consistent with his earlier remarks, they nevertheless contradicted one of the basic strategic principles of the fifth five-year plan, which called for the development of a socially aware Saudi population willing to comply with compulsory military service. Prince Sultan's statement was important, nevertheless, because of ongoing religious currents within the armed forces. By inference, a conscript army might well be expected to be "an even more fertile breeding ground for opposition to the government," a development the ruling family would not support.⁵⁰

A final sign that Saudi Arabia's militarization efforts went into full gear in 1991 was the heightened activity in the area of military construction. Contractors demonstrated high confidence in Riyadh by flocking to bid on new infrastructure construction projects. The Al-Kharj airbase bids in particular drew a great deal of attention. Al-Kharj, the designated home base for RSAF AWACS, was estimated to

⁴⁸If we assume that Saudi Arabia's population hovered around 7.5 million individuals, and use the current base of 76,000 soldiers in the armed forces, the military manpower over general population would stand at 1.0 percent. If the population base were higher, say around 11 million, the 76,000 personnel would represent 0.7 percent of population. An increase of military manpower to 200,000 (using the 7.5 million population figure) would translate into 2.6 percentage points. With the higher, 11 million, population figure, the figure would be 1.8 percent. A comparative analysis with other countries reveals that 200,000 Saudis under military uniform would rank alongside Syria, which boasts a 3.2 percentage figure (400,000 personnel in a 14 million population). Although not impossible to reach, costs associated with these percentages would be very high. Data used in this comparison are based on statistics in *The Military Balance 1991-92*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹"Conscription Ruled Out Again," CR-SA 3-91, p. 12.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

cost over \$13 billion to complete. Initial bids tendered in 1989 elicited only three responses. In 1991, however, 13 companies tendered bids to build approximately 50 buildings.⁵¹ Defense contractors, at least, believed that Saudi Arabia was committed to increasing its defense expenditures and embarking on an irreversible build-up of the kingdom's own capabilities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

In early 1992, Iran and Iraq remained Saudi Arabia's main competitors in the Persian Gulf region. This characterization, which was clearly articulated by senior family members, essentially meant that the regime acknowledged both the Iranian and Iraqi potentials in the area. In the case of Iran, the revolutionary government questioned Saudi Arabia's political as well as religious legitimacy and, consequently, considered itself on a collision course with Riyadh despite a partial political thawing in early 1992. In the case of Iraq, Saddam Hussein's threat polarized the security alignments in the region, especially after Baghdad abrogated all of its treaty obligations with Saudi Arabia. Few anticipated that relations between Saudi Arabia and either Iran or Iraq would improve substantially. Rather, the assumption was that all three would pursue competitive, even hegemonic, objectives.

Gulf Security Power Broker

Saudi relations with Iran, which improved during the war against Iraq, had first deteriorated after the 1987 Makkah massacre, when Saudi authorities machine-gunned hundreds of Iranian pilgrims. With Iraq's wings now clipped, Saudis were once again concerned with Iran's military purchases, its support for Islamic movements, and its attempts to gain influence in Central Asia. As a lever against

⁵¹In addition to the Al-Kharj project, British Aerospace was anxious to make progress on freeing finance for the planned building of the Sulayyil airbase in the south. In June 1991, 12 British companies prequalified as prime construction contractors, paving the way for their possible involvement in the building of Sulayyil. See "Defence: —As Defence Contractors Look Forward to More Pickings," CR-SA 4-91, p. 14; see also "—As UK Contractors Prequalify for Airbase Contract," CR-SA 3-91, p. 14.

Iran, Riyadh invited prominent Muslim leaders from the former Soviet Union to Makkah to encourage them to revive their faith and political self-assertion in their respective republics. Saudi Arabia enjoyed some influence in the area as it had earmarked most of the \$1.5 billion aid package granted Moscow in 1990-1991 for religious schools and development projects in the six Central Asian republics. In January 1992, Saudi Arabia opened embassies in each republic, whereas Iran had embassies in only Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Iranian embassies were, however, eventually opened in Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan.

Saudi concerns over Central Asia paralleled more fundamental differences with Iran. These surfaced in 1991 with the Shia uprising against Saddam Hussein. At the time, it appeared that the Saudis had asked allied forces to lessen their limited support for the would-be secessionists, because of fears of potential pro-Iranian gains.⁵² Subsequently, Riyadh agreed to establish a refugee camp near Rafha, Saudi Arabia, for Shia Iraqis seeking refuge behind Saudi and allied lines. This gesture was not an indication of a more active involvement in the fate of the Shia but merely a practical redeployment to enable Saudi troops to leave Iraqi territory.

At about the same time, however, the GCC+2 proposals enshrined in the Damascus Declaration raised the ire of the Iranians. The GCC+2 proposals aimed to pool conservative Arab Gulf states' resources with those of Egypt and Syria to ensure the security of the region. A product of the War for Kuwait, it excluded key regional parties, including Iran and Iraq. Although the declaration was careful to indicate that the alliance was formed within the framework of the Arab League Charter and excluded no one, it immediately provoked a worried response from both the Arab Maghreb Union and Iran. GCC states adopted several steps to mollify Iranian sensitivities. First, Damascus reassured Teheran that their close relationship would remain intact. Second, Riyadh, partly in response to Omani pressures, resumed diplomatic ties with Teheran towards the end of March. Third, and perhaps most crucially, GCC foreign ministers were authorized to delineate a specific role for Iran in any future security ar-

⁵²Jim Muir, "Iraqi Opposition: Moderation, Commitment and Democracy," *Middle East International*, No. 396, 22 March 1991, pp. 11-12.

rangements in the region.⁵³ Against this seemingly promising background, Iran and Saudi Arabia were able to reach an agreement on Iranian participation in the 1991 hajj (pilgrimage) to Makkah and Madinah, both of which were incident free.

To be sure, Saudi Arabia's increasingly formal contacts with Iran were linked to recent internal political developments in the kingdom, centered around Shia demands for better representation. It was unclear, however, whether the link resulted from a deliberate Saudi initiative or from an independent force that was acquiring a life and a momentum of its own. It was conceivable that the call for greater Islamization of the kingdom as well as the "encouragement of Islamic movements elsewhere in the Arab world" was inspired by Riyadh to position itself favorably with Western powers, especially in terms of its military modernization program.⁵⁴ It is also conceivable that Islamic movements genuinely frightened incumbent pro-Western GCC regimes that were faced with the remaining option of acknowledging the need to accommodate opponents.

Under the premise that the al-Saud encouraged the ulama to issue their May 1991 petition, tolerated anti-Western demonstrations by Iranian pilgrims at the 1992 pilgrimage, and generally intended to strengthen their pragmatic alliance with Iran, Riyadh's actions illustrated how volatile developments throughout the region could become, and how foreign powers would be caught in the middle of very difficult situations.

But Riyadh's decision to suspend its vituperative attacks on the late Ayatollah Khomeini may have reflected a realization that fundamentalist opinion in the kingdom was gaining influence which, in turn, called for a reexamination of Iran's position in the region. Still, by sanctioning the revolutionary government, the al-Saud were condoning the "overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty by a population that had become thoroughly disenchanted with the ruling family's corruption, its championing of a Western lifestyle, its acceptance of a U.S.-allocated role in the defense of the Gulf, its dealings with Israel,

⁵³"GCC Foreign Ministers' Extraordinary Meet Held," *FBIS-NES-91-087*, 6 May 1991, pp. 1-3.

⁵⁴"Warmer Relations with Iran," *CR-SA 3-91*, p. 8.

and its high production oil policies.⁵⁵ Since parallels between the Shah's position in 1978 and that of the al-Saud in 1991 were all too apparent, Saudi Arabia's reconciliation with Iran was more the result of necessity than desire. Saddam Hussein had survived in Iraq, and the smaller GCC states, led by Oman, were actively pressing for closer ties with Teheran. Moreover, the Saudi fence-mending with Teheran was meant to protect Riyadh internally, by eliminating any negative comparisons with Shah Muhammad Pahlavi's regime.

Statements made by Iranian foreign minister Ali Akbar Velayati in Saudi Arabia in April 1991, and by Prince Saud al-Faisal during his visit to Teheran in June 1991, were revealing indeed. The most evident concession was accepting 115,000 Iranian pilgrims, a huge increase over the figure of 45,000, which was imposed after the fateful 1987 Makkah demonstration. Furthermore, the Saudis accepted Teheran's demand that 5,000 pilgrims be given special status as "relatives of martyrs," thereby acknowledging, even if partially, the Iranian version of the 1987 tragedy.

Another, perhaps more significant, concession was to allow Iranian pilgrims to stage a political demonstration to express their "disavowal of pagans."⁵⁶ The "peaceful" demonstration was well attended in 1991, and criticism of the West in general, and Israel in particular, was strident. Because the demonstration was peaceful, the Saudis agreed to upgrade their diplomatic ties with Iran to the ambassadorial level. Teheran's ability to muzzle its more extreme haranguers resulted in an even stranger development, when an official Saudi statement was issued referring to Riyadh's support for Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War as "without having any specific aim against Iran."⁵⁷

To be sure, this openness was a clear testimony to the deep shock that the War for Kuwait had inflicted on the Saudi body politic. But it also was a warning sign for Riyadh that even short-term acquiescence could produce more permanent effects. By supporting Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War, Saudi Arabia had distanced itself from Iran

⁵⁵"Underlines Parallels with the Past," CR-SA 3-91, p. 8.

⁵⁶"Antipathy Rally Said Ideally Conducted," FBIS-NES-91-121, 24 June 1991, p. 52.

⁵⁷"King Fahd's Address to Pilgrims Reported," *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

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and, consequently, was compelled to adopt very limited and one-sided policies. Had the al-Saud remained neutral in that conflict, both Baghdad and Teheran might have behaved differently. Under those circumstances, Baghdad could not have relied on Saudi and GCC financial largesse to promote regional hegemonic ambitions, and Teheran would have been cognizant of Riyadh's acknowledgement of Iran's role in the Persian Gulf region. Consequently, Riyadh's acquiescence to Baghdad set in motion a whole series of crucial developments which help explain why the Iraqis invaded Kuwait.

Following the invasion, the Saudis adopted objectives designed to counter Iraq and prepared for battle by the end of October. With their resolve hardened, the al-Saud demanded "the withdrawal of all Iraqi troops stationed on the Saudi borders, together with ensuring that there will be no repetition of the Iraqi ruler's aggression against any other Gulf country."⁵⁸ In early November 1990, Saudi Arabia took the even larger step of allowing American commanders full control of Saudi forces during any offensive attack launched from Saudi soil.⁵⁹

King Fahd also repeatedly rejected compromise solutions. A Moroccan call for an Arab emergency summit fell on deaf ears. In the communiqué at the December 1990 GCC Doha Summit, the Saudis insisted that foreign troops would be withdrawn only "when the GCC member states request[ed] these forces] to do so after the circumstances that required their presence—the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and the threat to the GCC countries—[we]re removed."⁶⁰ This was a clear signal that unspecified threats could well require coalition forces to keep some forces behind until a resolution of the crisis was reached.

⁵⁸"King Fahd Reaffirms Stance on Gulf Crisis," *FBIS-NES-90-206*, 24 October 1990, pp. 22-23.

⁵⁹Riyadh's command and control agreements with the United States were negotiated by Secretary of State James Baker and Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney during their frequent visits to Saudi Arabia. Details are not available. For a "flavor" see Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1991, pp. 340-360 *passim*.

⁶⁰"Further on 11th Gulf Cooperation Council Summit," *FBIS-NES-90-248*, 26 December 1990, pp. 1-14.

Once the war started, Iraqi missile attacks on Saudi Arabia, combined with Baghdad's unilateral abrogation of all its treaty obligations with the kingdom, locked the Saudis firmly in the coalition camp. Indeed, during the war, Riyadh showed little concern over the mass destruction of Iraq, which resulted from allied bombings, or over its effects on Arab public opinion. GCC states, led by Saudi Arabia, rejected a February 1991 Soviet peace proposal, insisting that Saddam Hussein be brought down. On this score at least, the Saudis supported coalition positions that Iraq must surrender unconditionally. In early 1992, Riyadh went a step further, calling for the removal of Saddam Hussein from power.⁶¹

Throughout 1992, Riyadh evaluated the consequences of Saddam Hussein remaining in power over the near future. This was a daunting challenge because of the animosity that exists between the two countries' leaderships. Still, Saudi Arabia faced the dubious task of accepting this added challenge in the region, one that may have a life of its own. Against it, Riyadh may have few choices but to keep its guard up, rally the smaller shaykhdoms around a unified position, and, whenever needed, call upon its Western allies to help defend it.

Relations with Yemen

The feeling of solidarity with the Iraqi population in 1990-1991 did not affect the entire Yemeni population. In the North, for example, a number of tribal leaders rallied behind Saudi Arabia, although Riyadh's expulsion of close to a million Yemenis dampened pro-Saudi sentiments. On 23 November 1990, President Saleh announced that 817,000 Yemenis returned to the country from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. According to Saudi banking sources, an estimated \$4 billion was transferred from the kingdom during October and November 1990 even though Sanaa failed to derive the full benefit of a repatriation of funds on this scale. An unconfirmed re-

⁶¹Patrick E. Tyler, "Gates, in Mideast, Is Said to Discuss Ouster of Hussein," *The New York Times*, 7 February 1992, pp. A1, A5. Ironically, Turkish Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel offered some cautionary advice to Washington that toppling Saddam Hussein may not be supported by Ankara. The Turkish perception was colored by the Kurdish question but stood, nevertheless, in contrast to Saudi Arabia's. See Barbara Crossette, "Turk Cautions Bush on Toppling of Hussein," *The New York Times*, 13 February 1992, p. A16.

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port claimed that about \$3 billion of the total was transferred to Switzerland. On the issue of deportations, accusations and denials were traded back and forth between Riyadh and Sanaa. Links between the two countries were not completely severed, however; a December 1990 Saudi royal decree, for example, renewed a \$9.9 million contract for Saudi Medical Services to manage and operate the Al-Salam hospital in Saada, financed by the Saudi Fund for Development. It was perhaps significant that Saada was in an area sympathetic to Saudi Arabia.⁶²

Before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and Yemen were friendly even if complex.⁶³ The complexities were the result of convenience rather than genuine concern for the prosperity of Yemen. Essentially, Saudi Arabia, in the role of patron, provided a reliant Yemen with both budgetary support and development aid, worth about \$600 million a year. Unlike other foreigners, Yemenis were permitted to enter the kingdom without visas, and more important, they were allowed to establish small businesses without having local sponsors or partners. The resulting Yemeni presence in Saudi Arabia and the repatriation of earnings were, for Yemen, the single largest source of revenue, amounting to around \$1.2 billion a year. However, these preferential relations were seriously disrupted when the Yemeni president voted in the Arab League against condemning Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait. Relations soured further when Sanaa abstained from voting on various U.N. Security Council resolutions. Inside Yemen these decisions were interpreted as both a bold display of independence by the fledgling republic and a gesture of loyalty towards Baghdad. Riyadh, on the other hand, was annoyed at Yemen's posture, which was seen as siding with the enemy. In retaliation, the Saudis expelled a large number of Yemeni diplomats and then withdrew the privileged status of Yemeni workers by imposing the requirement of

⁶²"Relations with Saudi Arabia Remain Strained," *Country Report for Oman and Yemen* (hereafter CR-O/Y), No. 1, London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1991, p. 20.

⁶³For Saudi-Yemeni relations, see M. S. El Azhary, "Aspects of North Yemen's Relations with Saudi Arabia," *Asian Affairs* 15, October 1984, pp. 277-286; see also F. Gregory Gause III, *Saudi-Yemeni Relations: Domestic Structures and Foreign Influences*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, and Saeed M. Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict over North Yemen, 1962-1970*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1986.

taking Saudi sponsors. Sanaa responded by informing its citizens that if they arranged Saudi sponsorship their passports would be revoked. Despite the diplomatic row, an unrepentant Yemen refused to cave in, inherited a huge refugee problem, and lost an important benefactor. To be sure, the overall tone of these disagreements drew on the historical differences that existed between the two countries.

Omani and UAE efforts to soften the Saudi position over Yemen did not result in a reconciliation between Riyadh and Sanaa. At the end of May 1991, Saudi sources denied rumors that interior ministry officials were "preparing to issue green cards to Yemenis enabling them to reside and work in the Kingdom without a Saudi sponsor."⁶⁴ Riyadh posited that Yemenis should not expect special treatment and, to drive the point home, Yemeni pilgrims were asked to assume all pilgrimage costs.⁶⁵ The Saudi rationalization was that this "procedure" placed the Yemenis on "equal footing" with other pilgrims. In reality, it was another example of the kingdom's overall displeasure with Yemen. However, the Saudis did allow the Yemeni vice-president (and former president of South Yemen), Ali Salim al-Beidh, into the kingdom to perform the pilgrimage, implying that some doors remained ajar.

The Saudi-Yemeni estrangement was unlikely to produce a final break, however, for it was mutually beneficial for both sides to resolve their differences. At the end of the War for Kuwait, Saudi relations with Yemen appeared to be on the mend. Some Yemenis returned to the kingdom after Saudi Arabia's "project bureau" in Sanaa reopened. The threatened boycott of Yemeni Airways—in which Riyadh held a 49 percent stake—was averted. Indeed, the Saudis promised to pay a share towards the modernization program which was linked to the absorption of Aden's Alyemda Airline. Meanwhile, money crossing the border to the tribal areas alleviated some of the hardships caused by the loss in remittances. Nevertheless, a degree of enmity remained. The Yemeni minister for expatriate affairs, Brigadier General Salih Munassir Al-Saiyali, repeatedly maintained

⁶⁴"And a Disunited Approach To Yemen," *CR-SA 3-91*, p. 11.

⁶⁵In previous years, pilgrimage expenses for Yemenis were covered by Saudi funds, as a gesture of goodwill. Other recipients of this type of Saudi generosity included Uzbeks, Palestinians, and some Lebanese, among others.

that Sanaa would seek compensation from Riyadh for the estimated \$7.9 billion in property and assets lost by the returning Yemenis and would be prepared to resort to the International Court of Justice in The Hague if diplomacy failed.⁶⁶ These pronouncements notwithstanding, the situation was complicated by Riyadh's avid interest in the direction of events inside Yemen.

To be sure, the kingdom was unhappy with unification in that it created a major new entity on the peninsula out of two states whose differences the kingdom had previously encouraged. Political pluralism was also deeply disturbing to the Saudi monarchy as was the influence of secularism and socialism in the former South Yemen. Relations between Saudi Arabia and the new republic reached their nadir with the expulsion of Yemeni expatriates from the kingdom. Although a slight rapprochement is under way, Saudi influence could still throw the republic off balance. The kingdom's usual lever is the traditionalist northern tribes, and it may well provide encouragement to the vocal Islamist movements currently obstructing the trend to democracy and pluralism. Indeed, one option open to President Saleh is to ease secularist southerners out of power and enhance the conservative and Islamic profile of his regime. In this way, he would not only neutralize the potential opposition to his right but would also regain vitally needed Saudi financial aid. But such a move would most likely be opposed by many Yemenis as well as provoke armed resistance in the south, which would stifle Sanaa's attempts to absorb the south peacefully. No matter what, the potential for tensions between Yemen and Saudi Arabia for the balance of the century and beyond remains high.

Saudi Arabia's Role in the Arab/Muslim World

Conflicts with Iran and Iraq, which represented immediate threats to Saudi Arabia, nevertheless brought the rest of the Muslim and Arab worlds much closer to Riyadh. The Saudi public posture was that Iraq stabbed them in the back, and that many so-called Arab "brothers" fared no better. In the future, the Saudis promised that they would support only those who stood by them when they needed

⁶⁶"Relations with Saudi Arabia: A Marriage on the Rocks," *CR-O/Y2-91*, pp. 20-21.

assistance. This basically meant that the GCC, Egypt, and Syria would form a new nucleus of Arab politics, with Damascus taking the initiative in forging a high-level Syrian-Saudi joint committee in February 1991. GCC leaders endorsed a new development fund to lend needed financial support to the more sympathetic Arab and Islamic countries to grease the GCC+2 wheels even further. But unlike past commitments, GCC states decided to channel funds earmarked for specific projects, rather than hand donations to a respective head of state for distribution according to his own priorities. The GCC+2 breakthrough notwithstanding, the Doha Declaration stressed that the GCC was not embarked on an isolationist path, intent on punishing other Arab states. It talked, for example, about the paramount need to reunite the Arab world and identified the Palestinian question as the main Arab cause.⁶⁷

After the liberation of Kuwait, the Saudi hardline attitude towards unfriendly Arab states softened somewhat, but the general sense of anger persisted. By finalizing the GCC Development Fund in late April 1991, with an authorized capital of \$10 billion, the Saudis and their GCC allies institutionalized their aid programs. No longer would wealthy Arab rulers offer discretionary funds to a government in office. The order of the day was for formal contacts favoring the proven leaders and policies. While explaining this new policy, GCC Secretary-General Abdullah Bishara declared that Jordan and the PLO would no longer receive aid. Although Bishara subsequently denied making such a statement, it was, even if made in a moment of anger, reflective of the Arab world's disarray.

To deflect some subsequent criticisms, however, the Saudis channeled some funds to Palestinians in the Israeli occupied territories in mid-1991 through agencies other than the PLO, and instructed newspaper editors to tone down their hostile editorials about other Arab countries. Simultaneously, Riyadh embarked on a propaganda initiative to persuade Arab and Muslim states of the validity of the Saudi point of view. Starting in April 1991, they even "arranged for live satellite broadcasts of Saudi television across the entire Muslim

⁶⁷"Doha Declaration Issued," FBIS-NES-90-248, 26 December 1990, pp. 8-9.

world and have indicated that coverage will focus heavily on religious rites."⁶⁸

Other conciliatory moves towards Jordan were made in the spring of 1991. Jordanian trucks bringing in fresh fruit and vegetables were allowed to cross the Saudi border in April and the Jordanian ambassador returned to Riyadh at about the same time. Saudi airspace was reopened to Royal Jordanian planes in May, reflecting a dramatic attitudinal change. Similarly, in late February 1991, Riyadh lifted the embargo on Sudanese workers in the kingdom, but little movement was visible on repairing the economic damage caused by the mass Yemeni emigration.

These "moody" shifts in position vis-à-vis the Arab and Muslim worlds resulted because the chief regional security arrangement, the so-called GCC+2 plan, failed to provide an effective joint security force capable of satisfying all parties. For the GCC states, the GCC+2 was meant to provide insulation from core Arab issues, since the security aspect was still ensured by Western coalition partners. Differences within the GCC states themselves also emerged over Iraq, Iran and Yemen, precluding an implementation of the accords. Oman, which formalized its border agreement with Saudi Arabia in May 1991, was the leading advocate for good neighborly relations, arguing first, for better GCC ties with Iran and second, pleading the Yemeni case with King Fahd.

The War for Kuwait proved that massive weapons purchases and aid subventions to neighbors actually brought little security to Saudi Arabia. With hindsight, the argument that expensive weapon systems would ensure the kingdom's security was always somewhat weak. Indeed, the primary reason for this is the small size of the Saudi population—and military forces—and the rather large sizes of external opponents, including Iraq, Iran, and Yemen. Moreover, Riyadh was always concerned about a two-front move whereby Iraqis would invade from the north and Yemenis would push up from the south. This fear, exacerbated by Sanaa's support for Iraq during the 1990 crisis, prompted Riyadh to deny Yemenis in Saudi Arabia favored residency privileges. To compensate for their limited

⁶⁸"Determination to Penalise Pro-Iraqi Arabs," *CR-SA 2-91*, p. 9.

land forces, Saudis emphasized the need for a first-rate air force but even that proved inadequate.

In the aftermath of the War for Kuwait, Saudi Arabia aims to acquire a first-rate military force to protect the kingdom from foreign aggressors. Riyadh correctly argues that Baghdad retains a potent force with which it must reckon. Moreover, Saudi Arabia is also wary of Iran which, despite its apparent moderation since late 1991, remains a potential adversary. In fact, Teheran's ability to support subversive elements throughout the region was feared even more than its current massive rearmament program.

In essence, the main lesson of the war was that only Western forces could effectively provide for the security of the Arab Gulf states. This factor became more pressing when the GCC+2 approach to Gulf security (analyzed in the next section), touted as an effective solution, failed to take hold. GCC states mistrusted Egypt and Syria because the latter held unrealistic financial expectations from the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies. Rather, the preference was to pursue bilateral agreements between individual GCC states and key Western powers.

But by far the most important area of change concerns the domestic arena. With the introduction of limited political reforms through the creation of a countrywide majlis al-shura as well as 14 smaller institutions for the kingdom's provinces, the Saudi decisionmaking structure was widened in the aftermath of the War for Kuwait. King Fahd ensured that the crucial succession question was somewhat institutionalized precisely to limit future internal family disputes. Simultaneously, demands for more technical expertise within the ruling family increased as well, which was best illustrated in changes within the Council of Ministers. Yet, despite all of these positive developments, Islam will continue to be the ultimate model in providing guidance on which appropriate and acceptable political decisions would be adopted. Given that Islam successfully transferred loyalties from the parochial tribal unit to the Saudi state—and provided a basic element of trust among members of the Saudi polity—the al-Saud will preserve it as the country's salient legitimizing factor. To be sure, the War for Kuwait led to a resurgence of Islamic values which may yet prove a double-edged sword. If this resurgence is combined with economic prosperity—by no means ensured in a

rapidly changing environment—then the stability of the Saudi polity will likely be enhanced. On the other hand, if the kingdom's economic prosperity dwindles, then opposition forces may well gather momentum and challenge the al-Saud leadership. It is precisely because the al-Saud are aware of such possibilities that they chose to adopt more assertive policies.

Chapter Four
THE GULF SHAYKHDOMS: UNCERTAIN FUTURES

The 12th GCC summit meeting, held in Kuwait on 23–25 December 1991, backed the March 1991 Damascus declaration between its six members and Egypt and Syria as the basis for future relations among Arab states. Speaking after the summit closed, Secretary-General Abdullah Bishara read the GCC's "Kuwait Declaration":

the GCC member states express[ed] their support for the Arab action within the framework of the Arab League, consider[ed] the principles and objectives included in the Damascus Declaration as a basis for establishing a new Arab order, and also consider[ed] the GCC program on supporting economic development efforts in the Arab states the basis for any efforts aimed at achieving economic development in the Arab world.¹

This statement provided the basis for future Arab relations. The Damascus Declaration was to be deposited with the League (now back in Cairo) as an official document, further illustrating that the majority of GCC states favored—as late as December 1991—the GCC+2 commitment to a joint security arrangement for the region. Although the final communiqué affirmed the GCC's commitment to core Arab causes, essentially by supporting the ongoing peace process, it nevertheless stressed that its dealing with other Arab countries would be "within the framework" of principles laid out in the Damascus Declaration.² This official pronouncement indicated a clear departure from earlier consensus preferences, especially for the

¹"Kuwait Declaration," *FBIS-NES-91-248*, 26 December 1991, pp. 3–4.

²"Summit Issues Communiqué," *FBIS-NES-91-248*, 26 December 1991, p. 6.

smaller shaykhdoms, which were keenly interested in improving relations with their Arab brethren.

The communique's emphasis on Arabs was not exclusive of other actors, however. Member states were equally preoccupied with regional security matters including Iraq and Iran. In fact, Iran figured prominently in concluding statements, with an official expression calling for stronger ties with Teheran based on mutual respect. The council affirmed

its eagerness to lend momentum to bilateral relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran in the service of common interests in accordance with Islamic and international principles and conventions, and as a reflection of the depth of the ties of religion and neighborliness between them.³

This was the latest in a series of expressions of goodwill towards Teheran made since the Kuwait crisis erupted. Although Iran criticized the Damascus Declaration because it envisaged Gulf security involving non-Gulf states, Teheran was pleased that Iraq was singled out for severe reprimand. Vindicated by Baghdad's actions against Kuwait, Iran was keen to persuade GCC states that the real threat to their security and well-being was Iraq and not, as many feared throughout the 1980s, the Revolutionary Islamic Republic. As expected, the 12th summit declared that GCC states would not consider resuming normal ties with Iraq until Baghdad implemented all U.N. resolutions arising from its invasion of Kuwait. Secretary-General Bishara emphasized that Saddam Hussein posed a serious threat to the security and stability of the Gulf and must, consequently, be opposed.⁴

In some respects the summit reflected the fundamental difficulties facing GCC states. Threatened by Iraq, GCC states had stood with the Western powers to liberate Kuwait. There was a clear congruence of interests in 1990 between GCC regimes and their allies. With Iraq's military power checked, at least in the near term, GCC states turned to appease former opponents even if their full support was not behind proposals discussed at the meeting. Thus, the failure of the Damascus Declaration was principally due to GCC states' uneasy

³*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴"GCC Summit Backs Damascus Pact," *MEED* 36:1, 10 January 1992, p. 9.

ties with each other. To some extent, they lacked a focus on core Arab issues, or Islamic precepts, or even North (Iran)-South (Yemen) relations. Indeed, the smaller shaykhdoms feared Saudi Arabia most, because they realized that the kingdom's growing power could well usher into their region *Pax Saudica*. In short, the shaykhdoms anticipated dramatic changes in their region.

INTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

The challenges faced by the smaller Gulf shaykhdoms were broadly comparable. The more pivotal of these included:

- The rapid rates of population growth with a large proportion of restive youth left out of the traditional political processes;
- The emphasis on education for manpower development;
- Indigenous manpower shortages, which required a substantial expatriate presence;
- The expansion of government bureaucracies;
- Economic diversification programs away from oil;
- The adaptation of reinvigorated political institutions (majlis al-shuras and parliaments) introduced at very slow paces;
- The movement of people from rural areas to towns and cities (especially in Oman and the UAE), which meant that urbanization increased while traditional societal norms weakened; and
- Indigenous populations facing the need to reconcile and synthesize traditional moral values with emerging social norms.⁵

The effects of these factors on society were manifested in a partial detribalization process that encouraged the development of national political cultures, introduced a cultural erosion because of greater contacts with the external world, and, most important, influenced—even shaped—the social, economic, and political outlooks of suc-

⁵Shahram Chubin, *Security in the Persian Gulf I: Domestic Political Factors*, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981; and J. E. Peterson, "Social Change in the Arab Gulf States and Political Implications," in *Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States*, Washington, D.C.: The Defense Academic Research Support Program and the Middle East Institute, 1988, pp. 45-57.

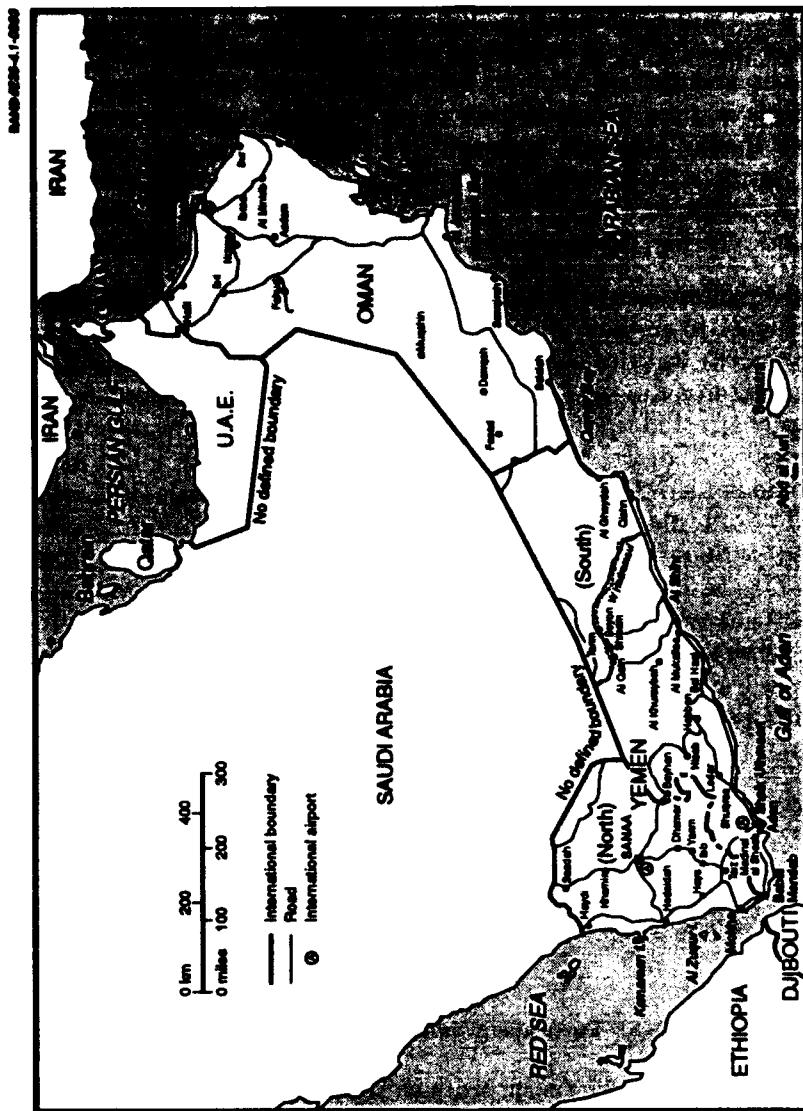
cessive generations. Consequently, these changes taxed the ruling families' capabilities and imposed clear constraints on their ability to deal effectively with most of these issues. Still, their chief concerns were perceptions of legitimacy, or lack thereof, that "citizens" held of the ruling establishments. This issue held immediate implications for the survival of these regimes.

LEGITIMACY PROBLEMS

Oman. In part to address this growing perception, Gulf shaykhdoms took meaningful political steps. In November 1991, for example, Sultan Qaboos of Oman issued five decrees instituting a majlis al-shura. The majlis, which came into operation on December 1, was to advise, review, and suggest legislation without exercising the power to enact it. It replaced the State Consultative Council set up in 1981 but differed from that assembly in that the palace was no longer alone in determining its composition. Each of the 59 new majlis members represented a wilayat (province) in the sultanate (see Figure 4.1). The selection process was quite elaborate: leading tribal figures in each wilayat nominated three candidates from which the palace then selected a member to go forward to the majlis to serve a three-year renewable term. Shaykh Abdullah bin Ali al-Qatabi was named by the sultan as president of the majlis, which was scheduled to meet four times a year, submitting recommendations to the sultan once a year. It remained to be determined whether sensitive issues, such as defense and foreign relations, would be discussed in public.⁶

Although the majlis represented a degree of political liberalization, it was far from being an open democratic institution. Yet, it was intended to be the first step in a gradual process aimed at involving Omanis in their own government, a process that Sultan Qaboos was certainly sufficiently sophisticated to initiate. Muscat's actions proved to be radical in comparison to other GCC states on the Arabian Peninsula, serving as a model for other Gulf monarchies, including Saudi Arabia.

⁶"Sultan Qabus Addresses National Day Rally," FBIS-NES-91-226, 22 November 1991, pp. 12-14; see also "Consultative Council Is Established," CR-OY 4-91, p. 11. Shaykh al-Qatabi maintained that in time all issues would be discussed by the majlis as this was the sultan's own wish, namely, to equip the country's leadership—and through them all Omanis—with the wherewithal to lead for several generations to come. Interview with the author, Muscat, 13 October 1992.



SOURCE: "Oman, Yemen: Country Profile," The Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 1991-92, p. 39.

Figure 4.1.—Oman

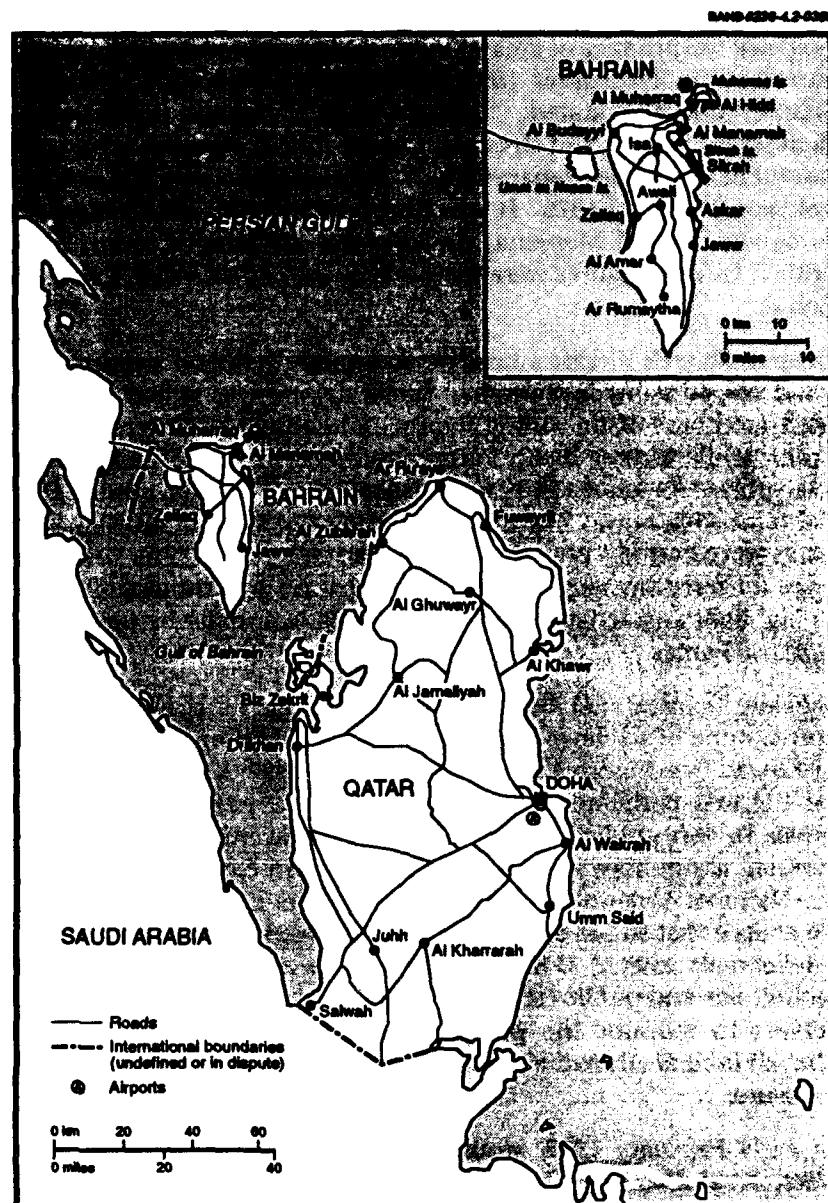
Bahrain. Bahrain fared far more poorly in addressing the need for popular representation. Strongly affected by the war, with many of its citizens and residents stranded on the islands to face the nightly terror of possible Scud attacks, as well as the growing marine threat of mines and the oil slick to fishing fleets and the environment, Bahrainis learned precious little of what was actually occurring all around them. Manama imposed a full news blackout on Bahrain (see Figure 4.2), despite the presence of Western forces and newscasters, in its attempt to portray a "business as usual" approach but, undoubtedly, the government may suffer the consequences.

The al-Khalifah were concerned that regional tensions might force their hands to initiate changes they were not ready to introduce. That concern was quite evident in December 1991 when a Bahraini participant in a Kuwait University seminar for GCC intellectuals was promptly arrested upon his return home. Abd al-Latif Mahmoud, a respected theologian, was apprehended for "delivering a lecture in which he argued that there could be no progress towards GCC unity without domestic political reforms in the member-states, including elected parliaments, freedom of expression, the rule of law, and curbs on the powers and privileges of ruling families."⁷ Although Abd al-Latif was eventually released from jail, his main points, including the vital point that a GCC-wide federation was required and that rivalries among rulers were preventing regional progress, touched a sensitive chord.

Manama, among others, interpreted these remarks as a clear threat to the legitimacy of the ruling family. Still, such views were not only held by intellectuals but widely shared among populations. They represented a new dimension in a rapidly changing environment. A great deal of attention was devoted to such concerns, even by the generally docile press.⁸

⁷Nadim Jaber, "The GCC: Expectations Unmatched," *Middle East International*, No. 416, 10 January 1992, p. 11.

⁸In addition to the War for Kuwait, Arab Gulf states were affected by the Bank of Commerce and Credit International (BCCI) scandal in 1991. Although Abu Dhabi was able to salvage some of its reputation, the magnitude of BCCI's fraud became quite apparent. This was another example, many Gulf citizens argued in private, of how their rulers conducted business. For background materials on the BCCI scandal, see David Lascelles et al., "Behind Closed Doors, BCCI: The Biggest Bank Fraud in History," London: *The Financial Times*, 9-16 November 1991.



SOURCE: "Bahrain, Qatar," The Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 1991-92, p. 19.

Figure 4.2—Bahrain, Qatar

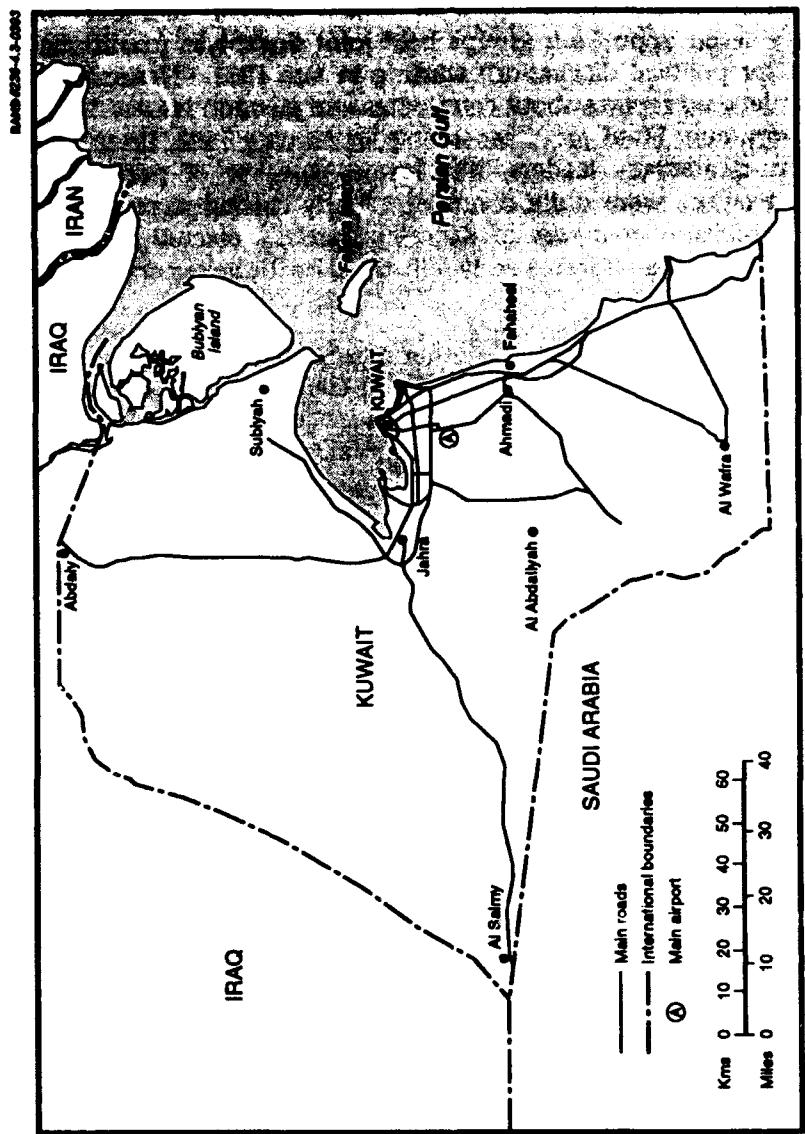
Unlike Oman and Kuwait, the Bahraini government's decision to hold out the promise of greater local consultation was cautious in the extreme. In December 1990, Prime Minister Shaykh Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa stated: "Bahrain ha[d] chosen to move towards democracy before, and since [it] tried it [once, it could] try it again, but there should be preparations."⁹ Bahrain had a national assembly between 1972 and 1975. It was dissolved in 1975, after violent disturbances rocked Manama, drawing the al-Khalifa's wrath on its critics. Leading figures were temporarily exiled to Kuwait, Cairo, and Beirut.

Despite Shaykh Khalifa's positive statement, political tolerance suffered considerably in Bahrain. Social debate was stifled and dissident members of the ruling family and cabinet ministers called to order, while former Baath Party supporters in the former National Assembly were, once again, under suspicion. The Shia/Sunni split in Bahraini society was exacerbated during the War for Kuwait, since Shias were barred from serving in the armed forces. Shia volunteers were turned away, explaining in part why the government chose not to highlight any active contribution to the war made by the Bahrain Defense Forces.

Kuwait. Political stability, which ensured regime survival, was the cornerstone of all developments for the shaykhdoms, but especially in Kuwait (see Figure 4.3). In late January 1992, Kuwaiti candidates for the first parliamentary elections in seven years launched early drives to win public support. Scores of Kuwaitis, including a few women, announced their intentions to run in October elections for the National Assembly, which the government had dissolved in 1986. To ensure that the al-Sabah ruling family kept its promises, Kuwaiti intellectuals invited U.S. politicians to advise them on campaign techniques and public lobbying. They also wanted international observers to monitor the polls, which was promised by the ruler, Shaykh Jabir al-Ahmad al-Sabah, under strong domestic and foreign pressure.

In early February 1992, would-be parliamentarians flocked to an election seminar organized by Kuwait University's Graduate Society,

⁹"Daily Interviews Prime Minister on Gulf Crisis," *FBIS-NES-90-240*, 13 December 1990, pp. 14-15.



SOURCE: "Kuwait: Country Profile," The Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 1991-92, p. 13.

Figure 4.3—Kuwait

where members of the Republican Institute for International Affairs shared their knowledge on universal suffrage and campaigning. To raise public awareness of election issues, leading members of Kuwait's seven opposition groups held joint diwaniyas (traditional forums for political discussion) starting in late 1991. Newspapers carried detailed reports about candidates and election issues. Since the government lifted press censorship in January 1992, interviews with pro-democracy leaders, like former speaker of parliament Ahmad Saadun, were quite common. Many carried strong statements criticizing members of Kuwait's partially elected National Council for being a toothless body reinstated by the government after liberation.¹⁰

Government supporters, on the other hand, accused opponents of drafting a widely circulated leaflet which claimed that Kuwaiti human rights abuses were far worse than those committed by Iraqi occupation forces.¹¹ The seven groups, which ranged from Muslim fundamentalists to liberal progressives, maintained that they did not initiate, nor did they support, the printing of this leaflet. In an interview with *Reuters*, Abdullah Nibari, head of the newly formed Kuwait Democratic Forum, "suspected" that government agents were behind the leaflet, because officials felt insecure as opposition figures gained in popularity.

¹⁰ Mariam Isa, "Political Debate Heats Up in Kuwait," *Reuters*, 2 February 1992.

¹¹ A November 1991 visit to a Kuwaiti public school where a room was turned into an impromptu gathering-spot/museum by a Kuwaiti Human Rights Organization, as well as to two resistance houses heavily damaged by the Iraqis, confirmed that some atrocities were indeed committed by Baghdad's troops. In retaliation for these actions and, more important, because thousands of Kuwaitis were taken by the Iraqis as prisoners of war, Kuwaiti atrocities were also committed against "collaborators," which, in the chaos that followed liberation, essentially meant almost everyone. Palestinians and beduins (stateless persons) were unique targets, however, and Kuwaiti injustices against innocent individuals were far too many to claim innocent mix-ups. The controversy reached the United States when a major Washington public relations firm was hired to conceal the identity of a young lady (later revealed to be the daughter of the Kuwaiti Ambassador to the United States) who testified in Congress that she witnessed Iraqi soldiers take premature infants out of maternity incubators to let them die on cold hospital floors. Both Amnesty International and Middle East Watch recanted their own reporting as more accurate information was made available in Kuwait. For further details on human rights questions in the shaykhdom, see *Needless Deaths in the Gulf War: Civilian Casualties During the Air Campaign and Violations of the Laws of War*, New York: Middle East Watch, 1992; see also *A Victory Turned Sour: Human Rights in Kuwait Since Liberation*, New York: Middle East Watch, September 1991.

In March 1991, the government tried to appease public criticisms by writing off consumer loans worth billions of dollars, spending billions more on compensation, and announcing plans to raise salaries. It also accused opposition leaders of sowing dissent in Kuwait at a time when national unity was crucial. In fact, most of these activities proved to be quite effective, as Ahmad Baqer, head of the fundamentalist Islamic Alliance, acknowledged. "The government . . . succeeded . . . [and this] will make our job more difficult," Baqer told *Reuters*, "but I think people will take and ask for more. They appreciate more money but still want parliament," he said.¹²

Opposition groups were united in their main demands, and this certainly was a major change in Kuwait. Most important, they did not relent throughout the year and held the government to its word. Perhaps their moment of triumph was on 31 March 1991, when 96 prominent Kuwaitis signed a document addressed to the ruler entitled *A Future Outlook for the Reform of Kuwait*.¹³ The document called for the implementation of the 1962 constitution, the restitution of the National Assembly as elected in 1985, a fixed election date, the inclusion of representatives from all political groups in the new cabinet, the right to assembly, political organization, and a free press, the reform of the civil service and the adoption of measures to combat corruption, as well as the establishment of an independent judiciary branch.

It was in response to this manifesto that the ruler reiterated his earlier promises, namely, to encourage the process of change by holding elections in the new year, perhaps even including women and other "second-class" citizens in the electoral process.¹⁴ But opposition leaders wanted fair elections without interference from official media manipulation and vote-buying by pro-government candidates. Furthermore, they demanded separation of the posts of crown prince and prime minister—traditionally held by the same member of the ruling al-Sabah family—and an end to the domination of key cabinet posts by al-Sabah members. Isa Shaheen, spokesman for the Islamic Constitutional Movement, declared that his supporters hoped that

¹² *Reuters*, 2 February 1992, *op. cit.*

¹³ "The Political Scene: —And the Opposition Issues Manifesto," *Country Report for Kuwait* (hereafter *CR-K*), No. 2, London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1991, p. 10.

¹⁴ "Amir Gives Speech Marking End of Ramadan," *FBIS-NES-91-067*, 8 April 1991, pp. 21-23.

the ruling family understood the time for a monopoly of power by any single family, sect, or tribe was over. Opposition leaders estimated that at least half the cabinet should be drawn from parliament to give it a real role in decisionmaking. Moreover, in the diwaniya discussions, many voiced their opinions and wanted full disclosure of government finances, complete press freedom, the repeal of laws against trade unions and political parties, and voting rights—now granted to only 15 percent of Kuwait's estimated 600,000 nationals—to be extended to include naturalized Kuwaitis and their offspring. With the exception of the fundamentalist Islamic Alliance, they also wanted women to be allowed to vote.

Not all opposition demands were met but the makeup of the new government in the spring of 1991 confirmed that a split existed within the al-Sabah ruling family. The al-Jaber (the ruler's) and al-Salem (the crown prince's) wings of the al-Sabah family perceived the need for political changes quite differently. When four members of the family were dropped from the cabinet, of whom three were from the al-Jaber wing, it became apparent that Crown Prince Shaykh Saad would not be a ceremonial figure. Shaykh Salem al-Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah, a solid ally of the crown prince, was appointed foreign minister, which essentially placed the blame for the Iraqi invasion on former Foreign Minister Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber. Kuwait's failure to prevent an Iraqi invasion, opposition figures charged, was the direct result of policies charted at the foreign ministry. The change indicated that the government was responsive to some of the opposition's demands, provided they were "reasonable." But mere cabinet changes would not satisfy disgruntled figures seeking steady progress on the path to full democratization.¹⁵

Following the 5 October 1992 parliamentary elections, which brought an unprecedented majority of 35 independent deputies to the 50-member house, Ahmed Al-Saadoun was elected speaker. Al-Saadoun's election to the sensitive yet influential position promised to usher in an era of accountability, as the 56-year-old is known for his impeccable credentials. Unlike the past, when the government

¹⁵The Kuwaiti electoral campaign was animated and productive in raising controversial yet essential issues facing the shaykhdom. For a flavor of newspaper coverages, see "Kuwait: Electoral Campaign Coverage," in *Joint Publications Research Service—Near East and South Asia*, 92-129, 1 October 1992.

failed to respond to the assembly's will, this election signified that Kuwait will have to come to terms with an increasingly "independent" body. It remains to be determined whether the al-Sabah can tolerate such divergences of opinion and the first clues as to the answer will become evident as soon as some of the 500 bills currently on the table are tackled.¹⁶

Qatar. There was little change on the Qatari political front in the aftermath of the War for Kuwait. The leadership of the very large al-Thani family has been unchallenged since emerging in the mid-1850s. The current ruler, Shaykh Khalifa bin Hamad, deposed his indifferent cousin, Ahmad bin Ali, in February 1972 when Doha experienced a mild "corrective measure" (the euphemism used to refer to the palace coup). Over the years, the ruler's sound judgments and "workaholic" habits have stood him in good stead with his subjects. Indeed, a limited form of participation was introduced in April 1970 when a provisional constitution was issued, followed by a majlis al-shura in early 1972. The latter's membership accurately reflects Qatari society. Moreover, the ruler takes an active role in the conduct of majlis affairs by calling its members to carefully scrutinize all proposed legislations.

Such steps enhanced the al-Thani's legitimacy even if most deliberations and decisions were secret. Of all Arab Gulf majlis, only "Qatar refuses to make its sessions public or allows its proceedings to be published."¹⁷ Despite this restriction, few Qataris objected; even fewer rejected the ruler's internal and regional outlook.

Doha improved ties with Teheran but clashed with Manama over the sovereignty of the Hawar Islands (see Figure 4.2). Relations deteriorated after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague agreed in July 1991 to consider Doha's claim to Hawar and two coral reefs—Fasht al-Dibal and Qitbat Jaradah—which, although within 3 kilometers of the Qatari mainland, are currently held by Bahrain under legal rulings drawn up during the former British protectorate of

¹⁶"Unity As Kuwait Elects Speaker," *New Arabia*, No. 43, 29 October-11 November 1992, pp. 1, 8-9.

¹⁷J. E. Peterson, *The Arab Gulf States: Steps Toward Political Participation*, New York: Praeger for The Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., 1988, p. 91.

both shaykhdoms.¹⁸ Doha is sensitive to the issue of Fasht al-Dibal because the coral reef, which lies only 15 kilometers from the vast gas reserves of the North Dome field, was the theater of clashes between the two shaykhdoms in 1986. At the time, Bahrain was constructing a facility on the reef which dismayed the Qataris, who, in turn, arrested foreign workers involved in the project. The incident was defused by Saudi Arabia, whose mediation efforts were later transferred to the GCC. When the GCC failed to resolve the dispute in an authoritative way, Qatar went to the ICJ. Bahrain acknowledged receipt of a copy of Qatar's claim from the ICJ but has rejected its contents even as the Saudis were continuing their mediation efforts.

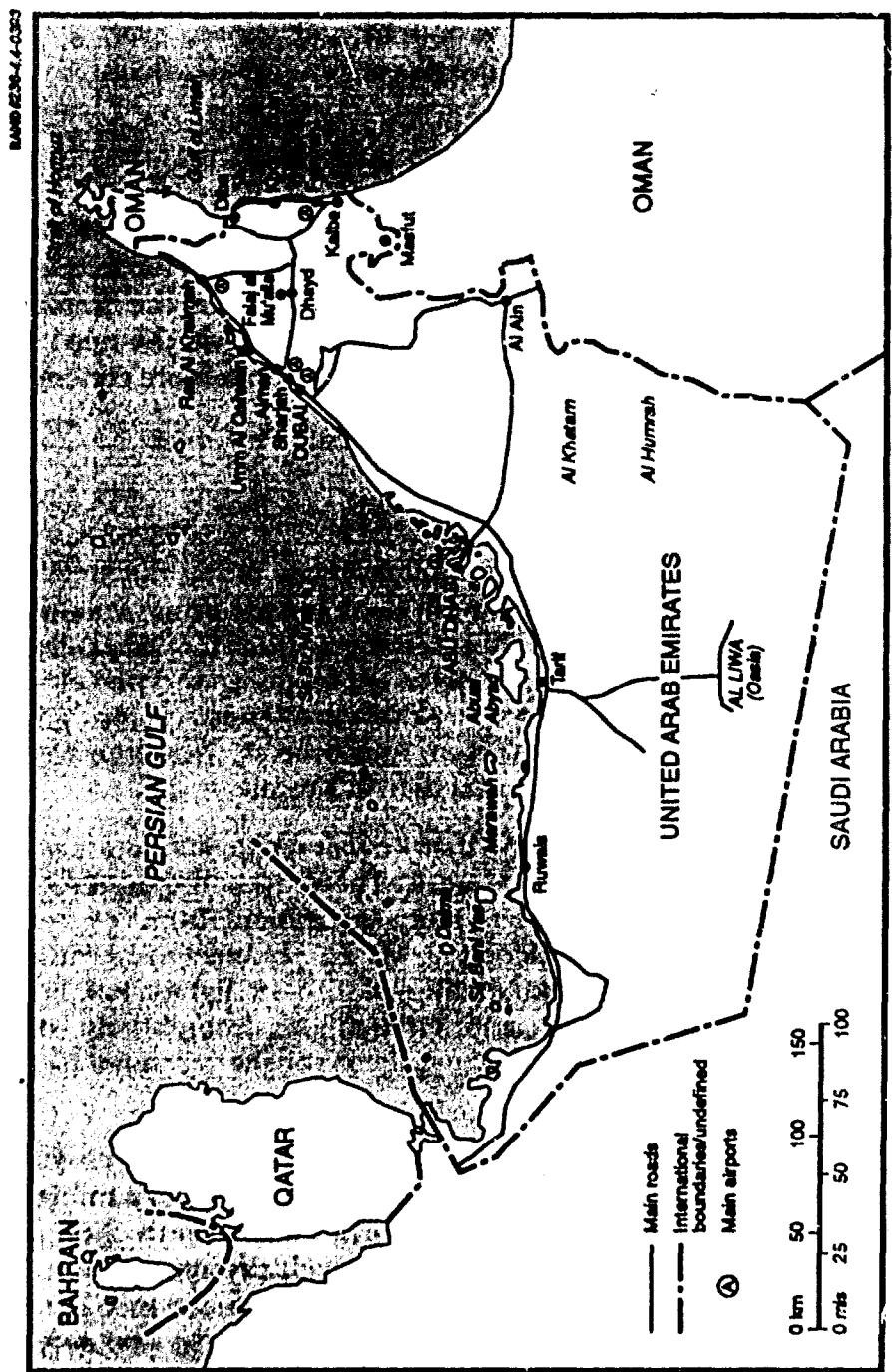
United Arab Emirates. In October 1991, the provisional constitution faced renewal once again but, in the wake of the War for Kuwait, there appeared to be no major debate and the status quo survives. The ruler of Abu Dhabi, Shaykh Zayid al-Nahayyan, was re-elected president of the UAE (see Figure 4.4) and Shaykh Makhtoum, the new ruler of Dubayy, assumed the vice presidency for a five-year term.¹⁹

Although too early to ascertain with any degree of certainty the impact of the BCCI scandal, early signs indicate that Abu Dhabi will successfully weather the storm, even if the final settlement may cost the shaykhdom around \$4 billion. Still, the scandal tarnished Abu Dhabi's reputation around the world "and this blow to confidence may not only damage the regional and international abilities of UAE financial institutions, but could also be a major setback to establishing a UAE offshore banking center as was proposed in May [1991]."²⁰ On the domestic front, at least, certain conditions are slowly changing, and while the ruling families are unlikely to be unseated, signs of new political realities are emerging. Increasingly, UAE citizens are demanding that their rulers make wiser choices, distance the country from internal and international scandals, and preserve friendly ties with all regional powers. Indeed, Abu Dhabi

¹⁸"Qatar and Bahrain Have Gone to the ICJ," *MEED* 35:29, 26 July 1991, p. 10.

¹⁹"President Shaikh Zayed Has Been Re-Elected," *MEED* 35:44 8, November 1991, p. 29.

²⁰"The Impact of the BCCI Closure—and the Longer Term," *Country Report for the United Arab Emirates* (hereafter CR-UAE), No. 3, London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1991, p. 4.



SOURCE: "United Arab Emirates: Country Profile," The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1991-92, p. 18.

Figure 4.4—United Arab Emirates

managed to improve relations with Iran and Oman, even if no progress was reached over the country's constitutional makeup.

NATIONAL SECURITY POLICIES IN THE 1990s

True to their traditional outlooks, Gulf shaykhdoms articulated national security policies through age-old political survival techniques. By 1992, however, and in large measure because of the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, and the War for Kuwait, the need to defend their territories persuaded Gulf rulers to adopt more concrete defensive steps.

MILITARIZATION

Militarization is among the more difficult issues facing the smaller Gulf shaykhdoms. The War for Kuwait demonstrated their vulnerabilities which, in turn, created a new set of questions for wary rulers. Would they have to create credible deterrent forces against perceived threats, or should they rely on Saudi Arabia or Western forces to defend them against Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and others? Nowhere were these questions more urgently raised than in Kuwait.

Preliminary indications suggested that Kuwait would accelerate major efforts to upgrade its military forces. The shaykhdom decided to purchase an entire arsenal of military equipment from Western sources, including Apache helicopters, M1-A2 Abrams tanks, Patriot missiles, Hawk batteries, and additional F/A-18 fighter-bombers from the United States, and assorted weapons from Britain and France. In this respect, however, Kuwait also sought to cement long-term ties with the United States.

On 19 September 1991, Washington and Kuwait signed a ten-year defense pact which involved the prepositioning of heavy military equipment in Kuwait (apparently at Subiya on the north shore of Kuwait Bay), training the Kuwaiti Army (which presumably would require a small number of American personnel to be stationed in the country), joint military exercises, legal status—or extraterritoriality—

of U.S. forces in Kuwait, and access to Kuwaiti ports and airbases.²¹ Kuwait's two airbases were to be upgraded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to make them more "interoperable" with the U.S. Air Force and allow for the more rapid deployment of substantial American troops.²² The pact, however, did not include provisions for permanent U.S. bases in Kuwait, disappointing the latter's ruling family.

Prime Minister Shaykh Saad Abdallah al-Salem al-Sabah sounded very defensive in addressing the National Council a week later, when he denied that "there were any secret clauses to the agreement" while admitting that he would like to see the defense pact developed—the code for allowing U.S. bases in the future—and he confirmed that similar pacts with the United Kingdom and France were being negotiated.²³ Kuwait announced that it planned to replace its French Mirages with 40 F-18 fighter-bombers, six of which were delivered in early 1992; defense ministry officials were reportedly studying a slew of additional weapons systems including Apache attack helicopters, Abrams tanks, Hawk, and Patriot missiles.²⁴ In October 1992, Washington signed a \$1.2 billion sales agreement with Kuwait for 236 General Dynamics M-1A2 main battle tanks.²⁵

Reactions to the U.S.-Kuwaiti bilateral security agreement varied. Not surprisingly, Iraq was not impressed, but other regional countries' reactions were more interesting. For example, despite their official silence, the Egyptians were quite unhappy. Various unofficial pronouncements by sources known to be close to President Mubarak suggested that there was more to the pact than had been announced.²⁶ Cairo argued that this accord was the end of the Damascus Declaration and the notion of a joint Egyptian/Syrian commitment to GCC security. Not even Shaykh Jaber's reiteration of

²¹Nadim Jaber, "The Gulf: Elusive Security," *Middle East International*, No. 409, 27 September 1991, pp. 12-13; see also "Signing of Defense Agreement with U.S. Viewed," *FBIS-NES-91-184*, 23 September 1991, pp. 28-29.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 12.

²³"Defense Treaty with the USA Is Signed," *CR-K 4-91*, p. 6; see also "Defense Minister Says No to U.S. Bases," *Saut al-Kuwait al-Duwali*, 26 September 1991, p. 4, in *FBIS-NES-91-188*, 27 September 1991, p. 23.

²⁴Edmund O'Sullivan, "Gulf Defence: The Quest for Reliable Friends," *MEED* 35:49, 13 December 1991, pp. X8-X9.

²⁵John G. Roos, "Kuwaiti Results: M1A2 Batters Challenger; Warrior Betters Bradley," *Armed Forces Journal International* 130:4, November 1992, p. 25.

²⁶Nadim Jaber, *op. cit.*, 27 September 1991, p. 13.

the Kuwaiti commitment to the Declaration, made during a visit by the emir to Egypt on 19 September 1991, would convince the Egyptians otherwise.²⁷ To demonstrate their frustrations with the Kuwaitis, Egypt's parliament delivered an unprecedented snub to the al-Sabah by rejecting the terms of a \$250 million loan from the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED).²⁸ The loan was designed to assist Egyptians who lost their livelihoods in both Kuwait and Iraq in setting up businesses in Egypt, but its high interest rates (22 percent) were considered insulting to Egyptian parliamentarians. The Kuwaitis, for their part, suggested that there may still be a consolation prize for Egypt in the form of an invitation to station a token force in Kuwait but all hopes of such a "deal"—soldiers for cash—vanished by the end of 1991.

The al-Sabah's failures in winning over Cairo did not dissuade them from continuing their rapprochement with the West. In addition to their bilateral security agreement with Washington, Kuwaitis negotiated separate agreements with the British and French. In early October 1991, the emir visited London and Paris, ostensibly to thank the British and French populations for their support in the liberation of the shaykhdom. Kuwait's principal European military allies were also asked to increase their training visits by RAF and FAF aircraft. Full-fledged accords were in the works and the French agreement, which received a public endorsement by President François Mitterrand, included the prepositioning of supplies, as well as specific steps allowing French troops to use Kuwaiti bases and to train indigenous Kuwaiti personnel in France as well as the shaykhdom.²⁹

²⁷"Kuwaiti Amir Arrives for One-Day Visit," FBIS-NES-91-182, 19 September 1991, pp. 5-6.

²⁸"The People's Assembly Has Objected to the Terms of Loans," MEED 35:39, 4 October 1991, p. 22.

²⁹Both British and French officials were keenly interested in strengthening their relationships with Kuwait and the other Arab Gulf monarchies, partly to prevent the United States from emerging as the dominant power in the region, and partly to maintain their edge in the growing arms sales to GCC states. In 1990, for example, France's military exports increased by a whopping 67 percent. Paris was determined to continue its sales as was London, where the arms manufacturing lobby was very active. See Jacques Isnard, "Avec une hausse des commandes de 67% en 1990, la crise du golfe a profité aux industriels français de l'armement," *Le Monde*, 3 July 1991, p. 8; and Paul Abrahams, "Contractors Lobby Government over Helicopter Orders," *The Financial Times*, 16 July 1991, p. 10.

Similarly, a Kuwaiti-British accord was completed in October 1991, although no final announcement was made public until early 1992.³⁰

Despite these positive steps, unrest was reported in the Kuwaiti armed forces, which bodes ill for the future. After its poor performance against the Iraqis, rank and file members—especially those who remained in Kuwait and participated in the fledgling resistance—expected that some punitive measures would be taken against those responsible for the debacle. That nothing was done was clearly at the root of widespread dissatisfaction among the army's junior officer corps after liberation.

In May and June 1991, two separate petitions were circulated by officers demanding the investigation and removal of the army chief of staff and a group of officers. The petitions were submitted to the ruler and signed by more than 1,000 junior officers, who defied a ban on public gatherings and met at a suburban mosque where they threatened to resign if action was not taken.³¹ No action was taken by the emir, and no resignations took place. The second petition highlighted the officers' concerns regarding the army's chronically poor staffing record, and the policy of excluding the bedun (stateless Arabs) who, before the invasion constituted the bulk of the non-commissioned ranks of the army. According to reliable sources, the removal of the bedun left the Kuwaiti army with four battalions totaling no more than 8,200 men, compared with the 16,000 men it had before the Iraqi invasion.³²

In addition to Kuwait's bilateral security agreements with Western powers, the UAE also signed a military pact with France on 11 September 1991.³³ During his visit to Paris, Shaykh Zayid declared that the military cooperation agreement stressed his opposition to the long-term presence of foreign troops on UAE soil through French training of indigenous forces. The French agreement was narrow in scope and, unlike the accord concluded between Kuwait and Washington, did not envisage a permanent Western presence in the

³⁰"Kuwait-UK Defense Accord Ready for 'Implementation,'" *Mideast Mirror*, 14 October 1991, pp. 28-29.

³¹Nadim Jaber, "Kuwait: Reformers Dismayed," *Middle East International*, No. 402, 14 June 1991, pp. 9-10.

³²"Kuwait," in IISS, *The Military Balance 1991-1992*, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

³³"France Pitches for Tank Deal," *MEED* 35:37, 20 September 1991, p. 26.

UAE. It provided for joint maneuvers and cooperation in testing a desert version of the AMX-40 Leclerc tank, which Abu Dhabi was interested in purchasing. Paris had supplied the bulk of the federation's defense equipment in the past and was well positioned to exercise considerable influence with the UAE, especially on foreign policy matters.

Abu Dhabi announced that an offset program would be introduced, requiring all defense contractors in the future to participate. Although details were not finalized, contractors were expected to invest 60 percent of the value of a contract's technical content in the UAE.³⁴ The first contract likely to involve an offset arrangement was a \$250 million deal with the Douglas Corporation to supply 20 Apache attack helicopters. It was not clear, however, whether Douglas would accept these offset terms. Western manufacturers were likely to find mutually acceptable terms, as Abu Dhabi planned to allocate between \$2-\$4 billion a year on defense equipment and services over the next few years.³⁵ Abu Dhabi was confident that suppliers would favor its terms as it expressed an interest in enlarging its purchasing pool. During the Dubayy 91 Air Show, held in November 1991, Defense Minister Shaykh Muhammad bin Rashid al-Maktoum announced that the UAE was considering the purchase of up to 40 Russian military aircraft to supplement its growing air power. This option was clearly available because Russia was in need of hard currency and willing to sell advanced aircraft. But Western manufacturers were equally interested in the UAE's potential orders and were not about to concede lucrative deals.

For its part, Oman was also embarked on a steady military build-up program, aimed at enhancing the sultanate's defensive capabilities. In July 1991, Washington notified the Congress of its intention to sell

³⁴It is almost impossible to determine what constitutes a particular contract's terms. Discussions with individuals dealing with offset projects in Saudi Arabia and the UAE revealed that "technical" is the preprofit stage which, for obvious reasons, is almost always secret. Consequently, what an international company truly chooses to invest may have more to do with expectations for future contracts than with a genuine offset program whereby a predetermined percentage of total costs is invested in the client-state.

³⁵"UAE Offset Program Is Under Discussion," *CR-UAE 3-91*, p. 13; in late February 1993, Abu Dhabi confirmed the purchase of 436 Leclerc main battle tanks from France in a deal worth an estimated \$3.8 billion; see "Gulf Defence Hots Up," *MEED 37:8*, 26 February 1993, p. 18.

Muscat 119 armored vehicles.³⁶ Congress had the normal 30 days to oppose the \$150 million sale but did not object.

In September 1991, the Omani Navy placed a \$250 million order for two British Corvettes.³⁷ Although the sale increased the Omani Navy's missile craft force by 50 percent, it was believed that Muscat was keenly interested in a far larger order. Budgetary constraints most probably precluded the signing of the much discussed eight-vessel order. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the Omani Army doubled its armored strength with the acquisition of 43 American made M60A3 tanks in 1991 to complement its Chieftain tanks. The same source indicates that only the navy increased its personnel in 1990-1991 from 2,500 to 3,400. The army remained staffed by 20,000 active servicemen, and the air force by 3,000.³⁸

Aware of threatening regional tensions, Muscat was very much interested in maintaining its slow but steady military build-up, and, like its neighbors, developed its ties with Western partners. Although all five shaykhdoms were aware of the need to coordinate their weapons purchases and, more important, to standardize their equipment, they also cherished their individual defense policies. Not only were they concerned with the Iranian, Iraqi, and Yemeni threats, but Gulf rulers were equally wary of Saudi Arabia's emerging military power. In the end, however, there remained narrow constraints on their near-term military growth potential, because of manpower and resource limitations. True to their traditions, conservative Arab rulers juggled age-old contradictions which maintained very close ties with trusted Western partners without jeopardizing their fragile regional ties.

³⁶"The US Plans to Sell the Sultanate 119 Armoured Vehicles," *MEED* 35:30, 2 August 1991, p. 19.

³⁷"UK Close to Warship Deal," *MEED* 35:36, 13 September 1991, pp. 19-20.

³⁸IHS, *The Military Balance 1991-1992*, *op. cit.*, p. 116; in late January 1993, Oman purchased 18 Challenger tanks and 4 armed support vehicles from Britain for \$228 million. Unconfirmed reports indicated that an additional 18 tanks would be ordered at a later stage; see "Oman: Army Buys Vickers Tanks," *MEED* 37:6, 12 February 1993, p. 28.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Not only have the signatories of the Damascus Declaration—Egypt, Syria, and the six GCC member states—failed to devise an effective regional security framework in the aftermath of the War for Kuwait, but the GCC states themselves have been unable to agree on a collective defense policy. In November 1991, GCC defense ministers deferred yet again a decision on the proposed establishment of an independent force, because the Omani idea—to create a 100,000 strong GCC army—was unpalatable to Saudi Arabia and the UAE.³⁹ Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE preferred signing bilateral security agreements with the United States, Britain, and France to any regional set-up that would enhance either Saudi or Omani power. The smaller GCC states postponed (in effect rejected) the creation of this force not only because the Saudis and Omanis would have dominated it but also because they disagreed on joint strategic objectives.⁴⁰ Seasoned Gulf rulers argued that rapidly changing regional dynamics required the adoption of very fluid policies, especially towards Iran and Yemen.

Gulf Security Dynamics

Although Oman supported the GCC position to send GCC Secretary-General Abdullah Bishara to the October 1991 Madrid Middle East peace conference, the sultanate was more concerned with the much discussed Gulf security pact. It was as if Muscat saw no real linkages between the two. Sultan Qaboos visited Saudi Arabia and Egypt to hold discussions on the tricky issue of how to reconcile the Arab security arrangement envisaged by the Damascus Declaration and the sort of accord favored by Oman which involved an explicit agreement with Iran.

³⁹“Unified Army Plan to Be Discussed,” *FBIS-NES-91-228*, 26 November 1991, p. 2.

⁴⁰Saudi Arabia favored the build-up of its own forces which, from the smaller GCC states’ perspectives, essentially meant that Riyadh would emerge as a formidable power. Moreover, because of the limited Saudi manpower, especially if all available volunteers were directed to the national force, the GCC Army would, by necessity, have had to draw on the only other available pool—the Omani population. Given existing differences in internal and regional outlooks, it was not surprising to record how the project lapsed.

To be sure, Oman was reticent about post-war developments, and denied suggestions that it was involved in inter-Arab mediation.⁴¹ But it was not entirely disappointed that the Damascus Declaration lost momentum. Muscat was content with agreements involving Egypt and Syria to mobilize their forces in support of any individual Gulf state at that state's request, without providing a blanket regional security system. The preference was for Iran (and in a post-Saddam Hussein era even Iraq), to participate in a regional security set-up. This option, Omanis argued, was the only way to stabilize Gulf security in the long run.

Muscat was equally adamant about GCC-Yemeni relations and the need for substantive improvements in them. In part to set an example for his fellow ruling monarchs, Qaboos pushed for a rapprochement with Sanaa by accelerating Omani-Yemeni border discussions. At a time when the Bahrain-Qatar border dispute over the Hawar Islands flared again, Muscat's actions were significant. To further solidify their position in the region, Omanis signed a border agreement with Yemen on 2 October 1992, marking the opening of yet another fresh chapter in bilateral relations on the Arabian Peninsula.⁴²

Oman and Yemen agreed that the basis of the new frontier would be the Anglo-Ottoman treaty of 9 March 1914.⁴³ Although World War I prevented the treaty from being ratified, accepting it in 1991 indicated that Oman was ready to overlook Sanaa's sympathy for Iraq during the War for Kuwait in the interests of good relations between the two countries. Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Salih picked up where Sultan Qaboos left off, pleading for an early settlement of bor-

⁴¹"Minister Denies State 'Mediating' Between Arabs," *FBIS-NES-91-085*, 2 May 1991, pp. 6-7.

⁴²"Oman, Yemen Sign Border Pact," *Oman Daily Observer*, 11: 275, 3 October 1992, p. 1.

⁴³For a discussion of the critical Anglo-Turkish treaty of 1914, see Husain M. Al-Baharna, *The Arabian Gulf States: Their Legal and Political Status and Their International Problems*, Beirut, Librairie du Liban, 1975, pp. 196-220. This convention, according to Al-Baharna, was not published in the *Official List of British Treaty Series* or in any other publication, such as the *British and Foreign State Papers*. It was published, as cited in Al-Baharna, in G. P. Gooch and H. Temperley, *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, London, 1938, pp. 340-341, and C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Calcutta, 1933, pp. 42-43.

der disputes with both Oman and Saudi Arabia.⁴⁴ By linking the two issues, Salih hinted that progress on the Omani front would at least prompt Riyadh to consider negotiations on the disputed Yemeni-Saudi border.

For Muscat, the issues were clear: It was indeed a strategic objective of the Gulf states that they improve relations with Teheran and Sanaa without neglecting peripheral responsibilities. Others, in particular Saudi Arabia, perceived strategic objectives in slightly different ways. This was, of course, most clearly visible in the GCC's relations with Iran.

Regional Relations

Oman supported the U.S.-led multinational coalition against Iraq by providing staging facilities and contributing troops to the land offensive. Nevertheless, the sultanate stood slightly apart from its GCC partners in its approach to the crisis. Oman sought a peaceful settlement if one could be achieved. At the same time, it remained ahead of its allies in exploring links with Iran.

In November 1990, the Iranian press reported that Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati was invited to meet his GCC counterparts in Muscat the following month.⁴⁵ Expectations were subsequently lowered by Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Yusuf Alawi, who declared that "there [was] no need for Iran to participate in any GCC meeting," although he confirmed that there was a move to expand contacts with Teheran "with the aim, possibly, of holding a meeting between GCC foreign ministers and Iran."⁴⁶ In any event, Dr. Velayati visited Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE, and Oman individually before the 1990 GCC summit, stopping in Muscat on 16 December for a two-day visit. The summit itself, on 25 December, duly stressed "its desire to establish distinguished relations with Iran."⁴⁷ Oman went further when Iran's deputy defense minister was received in

⁴⁴"Salih on Relations with Saudi Arabia, Others," FBIS-NES-91-178, 13 September 1991, p. 11.

⁴⁵"Omani Official Visits To Discuss Gulf Situation; Departs; GCC Meeting Set," FBIS-NES-90-228, 27 November 1990, p. 80.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷"[11th GCC Summit] Communiqué Issued," FBIS-NES-90-248, 26 December 1990, p. 13.

Muscat, during which Omani-Iranian military cooperation was discussed.

Muscat was keenly interested in improved relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and, towards that objective, set out to facilitate the rapprochement. Muscat's persistence paid off in March 1991, when Saudi Arabia and Iran announced that they were reestablishing diplomatic ties after a three-year break.⁴⁸ The breakthrough was appropriately reached on 18 March as the Omani capital hosted a meeting between the Saudi and Iranian foreign ministers. A simultaneous announcement of the restoration of diplomatic relations was subsequently made from Teheran and Riyadh on March 20, and the Omani government was very prompt in officially welcoming the development. In early May 1991, Muscat was once again the venue of an important meeting of GCC foreign ministers, which issued the clearest statement yet of the GCC states' readiness to discuss with Iran the latter's role in any future Gulf security scheme.⁴⁹ The statement had all the hallmarks of an Omani initiative and was important in view of Teheran's disquiet over Western plans for the region. It also weakened the 6 March 1991 Damascus Declaration, which Iran perceived in negative terms.

To be sure, Oman was very conscious of Iran's opposition to the GCC+2 security plan, holding to the view that good relations among littoral states were a better guarantor than some form of proprietary or ideological rivalry (i.e., Persian versus Arabian Gulf or Sunni versus Shia legitimacy). Muscat was aware of Teheran's opposition to a large and permanent Western presence in the region, whether direct or by Egyptian proxy, favoring instead its own model, whereby "facilities" were made available to foreign forces when necessary. Such a position implied that the smaller Gulf shaykhdoms were inherently vulnerable to persistent territorial disputes and ambitions in the area, which favored larger powers. This perception was especially acute as Iran's and Saudi Arabia's powers increased dramatically during the past few years.

Bahrain was equally eager to establish some balance in its relations with the three large regional players—Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq.

⁴⁸"Diplomatic Relations with Iran to Resume 26 March," *FBIS-NES-91-054*, 20 March 1991, p. 14.

⁴⁹"Strong Links Seen with Iran," *FBIS-NES-91-087*, 6 May 1991, p. 3.

In November 1990, Bahraini Foreign Minister Shaykh Muhammad ibn Mubarak al-Khalifah led a diplomatic delegation to Teheran that returned home with an agreement to upgrade representation between the two countries from chargé d'affaires to ambassadorial level. Economic agreements, including the establishment of improved telephone links and shipping connections, were signed as well. Better relations meant that Bahraini offshore banks could start doing business in Iran, something they were especially interested in pursuing after the closure of the lucrative Iraqi market.⁵⁰

For all the progress achieved in the region, GCC states were plagued with bilateral disputes, of which the Bahrain-Qatar territorial dispute was the most blatant example. Renewed tension between Manama and Doha over conflicting claims on several small islands led to yet another Saudi-brokered meeting to find a compromise solution. In July 1991, the dispute was publicly aired again when Qatar lodged a claim against Bahrain at the International Court of Justice in The Hague.⁵¹ Saudi Arabia apparently favored Qatar over Bahrain in the dispute and this shift of support was another factor placing considerable strain on relations between Bahrain and the kingdom.

Relations between the UAE and Saudi Arabia were far from smooth, not only because Shaykh Zayid, like Qaboos of Oman, supported the reintegration of Yemen in regional affairs, but also because Saudi-UAE customs disputes emerged with respect to Kuwaiti resupply contracts. The BCCI scandal produced its share of negative publicity as did press reports suggesting that several Saudi businessmen contributed to the losses that Abu Dhabi shareholders faced in early 1992.

In addition, Abu Dhabi and Riyadh disagreed on the need for very close association between the UAE and Iran. Traditionally, the Saudis favored Dubayy and the al-Makhtoum, but most of their internal interferences have given way to more pragmatic policies with the UAE as a whole. Appreciating Dubayy's, and the UAE's, position in the Gulf region, the Saudis accepted a level of close economic relationship between the emirates and Iran but within limits. On the

⁵⁰ "Links with Iran Are Upgraded," *Country Report for Bahrain and Qatar* (hereafter CR-BQ), No. 1, London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1991, p. 10; see also "Minister Cites 'New Page' in Ties with Tehran," FBIS-NES-90-213, 2 November 1990, p. 11.

⁵¹ "—Including the Bahrain-Qatar Territorial Dispute," CR-BQ 3-91, p. 10.

other hand, any UAE intentions to pursue an independent policy with Teheran, perhaps to balance the rising power of Saudi Arabia, can be expected to draw the latter's wrath. Riyadh supports friendly relations between Abu Dhabi and Teheran, especially if the UAE plays the role of a bridge between the GCC and Iran, but has refused to sanction any rapprochement perceived to be against long-term Saudi regional interests. For its part, the UAE looks to Iran as an additional regional power to come to terms with, as well as a potential source of trade income. In fact, Abu Dhabi intends to benefit from the new opening of commercial ties between Iran and the Central Asian republics through a close association with Teheran.

As noted above, even before the War for Kuwait, Kuwait was engaged in a political participation experiment, in the form of an elected parliament. Similarly, Bahrain was also a "parliamentary" government, although the institution has been suspended since 1975. For its part, the UAE's National Assembly aimed to ratify a provisional constitution. Oman and Qatar experimented with consultative councils, each with concrete accomplishments to their credits. The winds of change were indeed blowing across the Arabian Peninsula and, by osmosis, war, or both, the trend was for more political participation. Although conservative Arab Gulf monarchies were perceived as "anachronistic monarchies," in reality they were confronting sociopolitical challenges and, in many respects, growing stronger because of their positive responses. In short, despite their many shortcomings, Gulf rulers were keenly aware of social developments, ranging from the evolution of class structure to the impact of modernization, requiring their attention.

In the oil-boom era, GCC rulers assumed that providing the highest possible incomes for their citizens would itself keep the lid on social problems. Direct and indirect aid taxed services, increased manpower imports, and eroded the value of work. The search for "instant wealth became an end in itself."⁵² But when the novelty faded, people turned to more fundamental questions affecting their lives. The oil wealth of the 1970s synthesized a new class structure in which the ruling families "enhanced their status as a social and eco-

⁵²Peterson, in J.E. Peterson (ed.), *Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States*, Washington, D.C.: The Defense Academic Research Support Program and the Middle East Institute, 1988, p. 54.

nomic elite while retaining political monopoly.⁵³ This phenomenon was paralleled with the emergence of a secondary elite—akin to a middle class—which benefitted from the economic boom and, not surprisingly, became much more differentiated. With better education levels, middle-class members were ideally suited to exploit opportunities as they arose.

The economic recession of the 1980s limited government capabilities to satisfy heightened expectations. Rather than pursue painful economic policies, however, Gulf rulers continued to provide free services to maintain social stability.⁵⁴ By failing to swallow the painful economic pill of the 1980s, GCC states created a postboom generation whose objective was to maintain its high standard of living at all costs. Thus, the postboom generation gave the rulers legitimacy as long as the latter provided them with material possessions. At some point, it may well be next to impossible to provide everyone with everything, and the middle class will grow and expand its influence in ways that might not be welcomed by the ruling families.

It is conceivable that an eventual alliance between middle and lower classes may emerge "to break the oligarchic social and political power of the elites."⁵⁵ Indeed, signs of this alliance were visible in GCC states' national assemblies and consultative councils, where middle-class members were increasingly popular. Moreover, calls for genuine political participation were emanating from all directions, including from within the ruling families where younger generations were marginalized with little or no influence on political issues. Although difficult to anticipate with certainty, ruling families that fail to heed these calls for political participation could risk the ire of their subjects.

Parallel to the dramatic political changes under way throughout the shaykhdoms, GCC states faced a serious gap centered on the absence of an integrative strategy at the GCC level, pronouncements to the contrary notwithstanding. The stale argument that imported military technologies could not be effective in the traditional environment of the Persian Gulf failed to register when the threat was clear.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁵⁴ Mohammad Rumaihi, *Beyond Oil: Unity and Development in the Gulf*, London: Al-Saqi Books, 1986, pp. 42–43.

⁵⁵ Peterson (1988), *op. cit.*, p. 56.

Gulf soldiers did participate in Kuwait's liberation and, although led by the United States, their attacks on a fellow Arab/Muslim state—with little or no hesitation—was a major development. The will to fight a usurper of power was there.

Gulf states will therefore need to learn from this experience and engage in truly integrative military steps in the future. Perhaps more important, GCC states must abandon the almost careless approach to buying any and all sophisticated weapons systems without the needed combat support and combat service support. Apache helicopters to the UAE and Bahrain may in fact perpetuate this whirlwind of inefficiency. Unless adequate measures are taken to provide the necessary support systems for these weapons platforms, their presence tends to be purely symbolic.

Finally, GCC states' dependence on foreign officers, advisors, and technicians has been a decidedly mixed blessing. In part, Gulf rulers relied on expatriate officers to diversify, and help ensure government control over, the military, but that may no longer be tenable. In the case of Kuwait, for example, a resistance movement germinated into a "security" force, and a military that fought with the allies demonstrated its allegiance to ruler and state. Consequently, it may be difficult to deny the Kuwaiti military a voice which, in turn, will be heard throughout the Arabian Peninsula. But given the large needs of GCC states, dependence on expatriate, especially American, military personnel will remain a fact of life at least for the foreseeable future.

Chapter Five

KEY FUTURE GULF SECURITY ISSUES

The War for Kuwait changed the relationship between the United States and the GCC states. It also changed the U.S.-Arab relationship. In this section, an attempt is made to identify the ways in which Washington's political and military presence altered the region by influencing local actors' behaviors towards each other as well as outsiders. In the context of U.S.-GCC ties, key issues, including regional security, disarmament, and economic development, are identified. The aim here is to analyze regional and international features that are influenced by internal political developments before turning to specific issues for U.S. political and military strategies.

In 1991 at least three different worlds emerged in an Arab world in disarray: the Gulf area comprising six Arab monarchies; Levant, including Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and, by default, Yemen; and the Maghrib, involving Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania. Others, including Iraq, were in abeyance. Of course, the three regions were neither isolated from, nor on amiable terms with, each other. During 1990-1991, for example, the world witnessed how Egypt and Syria rallied behind the GCC states, while a growing rift between the Maghrib and the Gulf occurred. Still, a new set of political realities emerged and, in the post-Cold War era, new divisions crystallized. How the United States and the GCC states manage these divisions will shape the future course of U.S.-GCC relations. At

stake is the security of the Gulf region as well as that of the entire Middle East.¹

REGIONAL SECURITY

Washington, along with its coalition partners, defeated the Iraqi military machine and, in the wake of the war, drew up elaborate proposals for a new order in the Middle East. Under this scheme, regional security included political stability, regime stability, disarmament, and economic development.² For Washington, regional stability essentially meant the steady flow of oil from the Gulf region and, precisely to limit its spillover effects on the area, a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Under the new order scheme, regional security in the Gulf would focus on the GCC as the core of a strong defensive pact.³

For the GCC states, on the other hand, stability meant regime stability and internal tranquility. To bridge differences between these two positions, Washington brokered the Damascus Declaration, which aimed to incorporate Egypt and maybe Syria in a new regional security scheme. The GCC+2 "phenomenon" was geared for Cairo and Damascus to provide the human muscle, the West technical support, and the GCC states legitimacy; presumably, all parties would strive to deter aggression against the six conservative Arab Gulf monarchies. Also under this plan, disarmament options required that weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological, and nuclear arsenals, be removed from the area. In this context, the transfer of missile technology to all parties would be curtailed. Finally, economic

¹A companion study in this project examines the effect of the War for Kuwait on the Levant in general and the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular. In this analysis, broad references are made to draw appropriate linkages whenever appropriate.

²For a critique of the new international order, see Ted Galen Carpenter, "The New World Disorder," *Foreign Policy*, No. 84, Fall 1991, pp. 24-39.

³Jan Krauze, "Les Etats-Unis cherchent une alliance a long terme avec les pays arabes" *Le Monde*, September 6, 1990, p. 4; see also Joseph A. Kechichian, "The Polarization of the Arab World: The Emergence of a New Regional Order," *Middle East Insight* 7:5, 1991, pp. 20-23.

development necessitated, according to this analysis, a redistribution of wealth.⁴

High-ranking officials in the United States and the Gulf region discussed these "security" matters at some length throughout 1990-1991. It was difficult to ascertain how many of these proposals (particularly the GCC+2 idea) actually reached maturity, but, with the passing of time, they appeared to be less realizable than once thought, precisely because of this main divergence of opinion on what is the most essential ingredient.

POLITICAL STABILITY

Inasmuch as the former Soviet cosponsor of the Arab-Israeli peace process remained preoccupied with its own disintegration, progress in achieving a broad regional political settlement has also been slow. Simultaneously, however, internal changes in the GCC states gained in importance as religious and liberal forces positioned themselves for the ruling regimes' favor.⁵ Religious authorities called on the Saudi government, for example, to overcome its timidity and apply strict Islamic rules. Similar efforts were launched in Kuwait. Liberal forces in all six GCC states, first on the defensive and then in more assertive ways, called on their respective governments to push ahead with political and social reforms. Although too early to state with any degree of certainty what the repercussions of these internal dynamics may well be for the Gulf region, there was little doubt that U.S.-GCC relations would very much be affected by them.

⁴In a remarkably frank essay, Dr. Khaldun Hasan al-Naqib, former Dean of Kuwait University's School of Arts, called on Arabs to seek security through development, arguing that GCC states and Arabs in general should seek "security through [both] short- and long-term development," by creating an Arab Common Market. Only such a policy alternative would ensure security and avoid conflict and confrontation with the West, posited al-Naqib. See Khaldun Hasan al-Naqib, "Possibilities of Cooperation and Conflict Between Arabs and the West," *Saut al-Kuwait Al-Duwali*, May 16, 1991, p. 9.

⁵As discussed above, both liberal and religious authorities petitioned King Fahd to adopt specific measures to propell these cherished objectives. In early 1992, the al-Saud ruling family adopted a more confrontational approach, warning all sides to refrain from further activities. Riyadh was increasingly wary of competing poles of influence challenging the authority of the al-Saud. See Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudi King Takes on Islamic Militants," *The New York Times*, 30 January 1992, p. A3.

REGIONAL DISARMAMENT

Discussions of regional disarmament abounded in 1991. Although Baghdad's wings were clipped, Iran continued its slow military rebuilding effort, even as Washington was envisaging a theoretical stop to the regional arms race. Reports that Saddam Hussein's forces were still potent, that Iran was set to acquire nuclear weapons, and the now certain emergence of the ethnically heterogeneous Central Asian republics into significant players on their own right proved unsettling for both Washington and GCC governments.⁶ Consequently, the latter decided to purchase additional weapons from the West, in large part to defend themselves from perceived threats. The figures—which ranged between \$15 and 20 billion for 1991 alone—are less important than the message such purchases send. *Despite Iraq's defeat, fear of Baghdad (as well as of Teheran) remained intact on the part of its neighbors.*

Moreover, and in large measure because of allied performances, the War for Kuwait introduced an additional dimension for GCC military planners. For many, the ideal deterrent was to duplicate the abilities of allied forces, even if this option was many years if not decades away.⁷ Still, to achieve this goal, GCC states were willing to allocate

⁶Reports on Iraq's nuclear potential, for example, surfaced in late 1991, claiming that Baghdad maintained a significant capability to pose a serious threat to its GCC neighbors. See "Iraq's Nuclear Weapons Program," *Mednews: Middle East Defense News* 5:1, October 14, 1991, pp. 1-6; see also Nick B. Williams, Jr., "Planning to Rebuild Military, Iraq Says," *The Los Angeles Times*, 18 January 1992, p. A7. Iran's efforts to modernize and resupply its armed forces also received particular attention. See Patrick Cockburn, "Russia Helps Iran Equip its Warplanes from Iraq," *The Independent*, 13 January 1992, p. 8; see also Scheherazade Daneshkhu, "Iran Presses on with Campaign to Rebuild Its Military Might," *The Financial Times*, 6 February 1992, p. 4. Finally, on the emergence of the Central Asian states and how they were perceived in both Washington and the GCC states, see Godfrey Jansen, "The Importance of Islam in Soviet Central Asia," *Middle East International*, No. 409, 27 September 1991, pp. 19-20, and "They're Off: The Arab-Iranian Race for the 'stans," *Mideast Mirror*, 16 January 1992, pp. 14-16.

⁷Military journals in the GCC states regularly carry detailed analyses of high-tech equipment aimed at familiarizing readers (primarily members of the armed forces) with the latest news. See, for example, Amin Mahmoud Atayah, "At-Tataurat al-Tiknulugiyat ill-aslihat al-Taqdidiyat al-Hadithat" [Technological Developments in Modern Weaponry], *Al-Quwas al-Jawwiya* [UAE Air Force Magazine] 8:34, February 1992, pp. 34-39; and Hishmat Amin Aamr, "Dawr al-Harb al-Iliktruniyat fi-daam al-Hajimat al-Jawwiyat al-layliyat" [The Role of Electronic Warfare in Night Fighting], *Al-*

whatever funds were needed. GNP allocations for defense spending told the whole story. Whereas most Western states devoted less than 5 percent of their GNPs for defense in 1991, several GCC states surpassed the 10 percent mark.⁸ But more military hardware did not ensure success for GCC governments; rather, the maximal use of available equipment was more meaningful. In fact, manpower shortages in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf shaykhdoms meant that past undermanning policies would have to be revised.

Although a selective undermanning of Saudi forces was a long-standing policy of the al-Saud—to limit the potential for military coups—present and future requirements may significantly alter the mood in Riyadh. The regular armed forces now comprise about 65,000, which is not sufficient to defend a country as large as Saudi Arabia. In the past, Saudi Arabia temporarily solved this problem by relying on expatriate technicians (estimated at over 10,000 before the War for Kuwait), and by using small elements of foreign forces in specialized areas.⁹ It formerly had an estimated 10,000 Pakistani troops attached to the 12th Armored Brigade stationed at Tabuk and anticipated, during the optimistic GCC+2 negotiations, beefing up this force with Egyptians. Finally, Saudi Arabia relied on the United States, first as an over-the-horizon presence, and more recently on the ground, to deal with enduring regional conflicts.

As the War for Kuwait demonstrated, the Saudi military—with or without the U.S. over-the-horizon presence—failed to deter Saddam Hussein from invading the shaykhdom and threatening the kingdom. *The overall weakness of the Saudi forces and their inability to act as an effective deterrent against a determined foe remained apparent.* It is also a reality that Saudi demographic limitations, the competition for skilled manpower in the private sector, and the need to maintain a separate National Guard force will all constrain the growth of the Saudi armed forces.

Haras Al-Watani [National Guards—Saudi Arabia] 22:102, March/April 1991, pp. 108-113.

⁸Richard F. Grimmett, "Arms Trade with the Third World: General Trends 1983-1990," *International Defense Review*—Defense 92 Supplement, December 1991, pp. 55-60.

⁹Mordechai Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era*, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

To compensate for these limitations, the Saudis will rely on a technical edge, especially in the air force. Riyadh will also rely on foreign support because virtually all of its skilled military manpower will have to be allocated to operational forces and command roles. It is quite likely that new sources of technical manpower will be tapped, especially from Egypt, with whom Saudi Arabia may yet forge a special alliance. The alternative to the Egyptian expertise is to rely exclusively on Saudi forces. Saudi discussions of raising a military force of 250,000 may indeed be possible because the Saudi population growth is so high (3 percent per year); it would be sensible yet costly to raise such an army over the next 10 to 15 years. Whether the al-Saud will be able to live with a large professional military is another matter. In fact, the potential for an internal clash between the ruling establishment and an institution with nation-building aspirations cannot be underestimated.¹⁰

Demographic factors were also a critical question for the small GCC forces, which cannot compete with Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, or Yemen. This fundamental weakness essentially rules out any ability of Kuwait, or the UAE, or Oman to project power in the region. Even Saudi Arabia, which enjoys modern facilities and good communications systems, cannot project force outside of the GCC area. But high-quality military facilities throughout the Arabian Peninsula allowed for the deployment of large numbers of allied troops and equipment into the region. Even in the most optimistic scenario, however, it is clear that GCC states lack the manpower and operational expertise to do the job themselves. The shaykhdoms, especially Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE, all face "critical diseconomies of scale and are separately spending large amounts of money on forces too small to be effective."¹¹ Simply stated, the training of a cadre of essential combat support services must be maintained at a certain level for the force to be effective. In the UAE, moreover, these problems are compounded by the decision to

¹⁰How a professional GCC military institution will perceive its role in society is an untested proposition. Will they automatically support the regime in power no matter what, or will they refuse to support one with questionable legitimacy? This issue is crucial because militaries are potential political actors in the GCC states, a role that has yet to be recognized by indigenous rulers.

¹¹Mazher A. Hameed, *Arabia Imperilled: The Security Imperatives of the Arab Gulf States*, Washington, D.C.: Middle East Assessments Group, 1986, p. 117.

maintain separate national guard units in addition to the Union Defense Forces.

Despite these powerful incentives to combine defense efforts, there is no evidence to suggest that the six conservative monarchies will in fact integrate their combat services organizations, train with compatible weapons, or acknowledge the need for the existence of a professional military infrastructure in the area. Short of such integrative efforts, conservative Arab Gulf monarchies will continue to struggle with their operational limitations even as they spend large sums on military equipment.

A few months after the optimistic March 1991 Damascus gathering, with its lofty promises to create a large force aimed at defending the GCC states with the participation of international, including Arab, powers, the plan was placed in abeyance. For the GCC states, the reasons included the considerable financial cost of this endeavor—estimated to surpass \$20 billion over a five-year period—as well as the identities of Arab partners like Syria. For Egypt and Syria, it was the Western, especially American, presence in the Gulf region that was untenable.¹² As a result of this indecision, GCC states reverted to their tested “over-the-horizon” approach. But this approach failed to deter Saddam Hussein from invading Kuwait. Thus, neither tested approaches nor fresh proposals of the GCC+2 variety were persuasive.

Given the sum total of these “experiences,” GCC states reacted positively to Iran’s regional security proposal, U.S. misgivings notwithstanding. How far GCC states would go in welcoming Iranian participation in regional security affairs remains difficult to determine.¹³ Still, if past experience is any indication, incremental confidence-building steps (i.e., Iranian return of Kuwaiti aircraft, a more disciplined participation in the annual pilgrimage) would be the maximum that could be accomplished in the short term. Washington remains a key factor in any GCC-Iranian rapprochement, and the thawing of Iranian-American ties is as important as Iranian-GCC contacts to the future of the entire region.

¹²Khaldun Hasan al-Naqib, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹³William Scott Harrop, “Iran’s Emerging World Order,” *Middle East Insight* 8:2, September/October 1991, pp. 46-49.

By all accounts, the Gulf region experienced dramatic upheavals in the closing months of the Cold-War era, but the U.S.-GCC relationship needed to take into account that little had changed on substantial security matters. Popular perceptions of the Gulf region in the United States as well as the Arab world at large were sharply different in 1991 than they had been a few months earlier. Millions condemned Saddam Hussein for his violent takeover of Kuwait. Millions more, especially in the Arab world, lamented the destruction of Arab military power. Simultaneously, they also condemned the West for failing to reverse Iraqi aggression through peaceful means.¹⁴ Still, as the 33-state international coalition members concluded that force was the most effective option, and that no political solutions could address intrinsic problems in a timely fashion, allied actions pushed forward and Kuwait was liberated.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

For the Middle East in general and the Gulf states in particular, the need for regional economic development proved to be one of the most effective political safety valves since 1974. The recent GCC proposal to create a \$10 billion fund to invest in needy Arab countries promised to go a long way if allowed to mature. If, on the other hand, these funds ended up redirecting previously allocated aid funds to favored countries, the effort would change precious little. Egypt presented the best example to clarify this point. By investing in the Egyptian private sector, GCC states could technically achieve some or all of the following:

- Assist the development of the largest Arab economic market by creating needed jobs; encourage joint partnerships to be set up and strengthen the Egyptian resolve to do likewise (this latter point was vital since much of the Egyptian income was routinely whisked out of the country by jittery businessmen with little or no confidence in Cairo's abilities to ensure a hefty return);
- Boost the capabilities of the Egyptian government to support the crucial middle class (the fastest growing sector of the economy);

¹⁴Stephane Bunel and Claire Pascal, *De La Destruction à l'Anéantissement: La Guerre Des Démocraties*, Paris: Librairie Le Point du Jour, 1991.

- Reduce the number of Egyptian expatriate workers throughout the Gulf; and
- Help ensure political stability both in Egypt as well as elsewhere in the Arab world.¹⁵

This example is an illustration of what can be done to alleviate the "fear" that many GCC states have of their fellow Arabs. Ironically, this fear factor was present despite the role of economic investments in ensuing long-term political stability for all parties. Herein lay the basic problem with the 1991 security-economic GCC+2 package proposal. The failure of this initiative was a good example of the dilemmas both the GCC states and Egypt, as well as Syria, faced. The objectives of the initiative proved unattainable because GCC member-states failed to reach a consensus on the economic package promised to Egypt and Syria;¹⁶ this despite the fact that GCC states, along with the United States, forgave a hefty percentage of Egypt's foreign debt.

Two reasons were identified to explain Cairo's motives in insisting on its uncompromising position. First, Cairo was very much concerned with the renewed influence of Iran in Gulf affairs which, it assumed, would lead GCC states to enter into an alliance with Egypt, the most powerful Arab state, on the latter's terms. Second, President Husni Mubarak was less than happy that Egyptian contractors were bypassed for lucrative Kuwaiti reconstruction contracts.¹⁷

Nevertheless, Egypt appreciated the need to strengthen the Arab Gulf force to meet present challenges as well as those that would arise in the future. Without specifically identifying these challenges, an all-inclusive listing included Iraq, Iran, and Yemen. The future, argued

¹⁵Alan Richards and John Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East: State, Class, and Economic Development*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1990, pp. 34-35, 241-245, *passim*.

¹⁶"Idea of Arab Forces Deployed in Gulf 'Abandoned,'" *FBIS-NES-91-220*, 14 November 1991, p. 1.

¹⁷Jonathan Crusoe, "Kuwait's Allies Await Its Favours," *MEED* 36:11, 22 March 1991, pp. 4-6; from the end of the War for Kuwait through July 1992, 28 of the 951 known construction contracts have gone to Egyptian firms. The United States received 501 (52.6 percent) and the United Kingdom 151. See John G. Roos, "U.S. Firms Reaping Lion's Share of Reconstruction Contracts in Kuwait," *Armed Forces Journal International* 130:4, November 1992, p. 34.

Mubarak, belonged to those who knew when to side with the strong, when to retreat, and when to move ahead. It was a post-Cold War approach and Mubarak—an air force pilot trained in the former Soviet Union but with enough Western credentials to pass for a born-again capitalist—was an astute student of the changing international environment. His message to fellow Arab rulers was unmistakable: GCC states would be far better off with Egypt forming the backbone of a future security arrangement in the area.

PRESERVING THE NATION-STATE SYSTEM

By forcing Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and insisting that the Al-Sabah family return to rule in the shaykhdom, GCC states and their international allies reaffirmed the inviolability of the nation-state system and, in their specific cases, the preponderance of their monarchic rules. At a time when the Soviet empire was crumbling, and republic after republic insisted on independence, the restoration of Kuwaiti sovereignty was a nonnegligible development. The international community set a beneficial precedent with far-reaching consequences for millions of people subjugated to authoritarian rule. In fact, with Kuwait's legitimacy restored, the nation-state system seemed alive and well in the Gulf. In a part of the world where statehood was of recent vintage, this development was more certain than any other. Still, Kuwait's 1991 independence was a costly affair, not only in financial terms, but also as far as fatalities and prisoners of war were concerned. There was the additional burden of the environmental disaster which left a mark on the fragile desert landscape. But no one assumed that upholding "statehood" would be a cost-free proposition.

It is the sum total of these complex and subtle social, political, and military developments that affects the future security environment of the Persian Gulf region.

Chapter Six

IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. REGIONAL STRATEGY

GCC states' security relations with Washington were directly tied to the region's strategic value. In the past, special emphasis was placed on the so-called "twin-pillar" policy aimed at protecting Western interests in the region by supporting the Iranian and Saudi monarchies. With the exception of Kuwait, all conservative Gulf regimes identified their interests with those of the United States and its allies until 1979. For its part, Kuwait maintained cordial relations with both superpowers even though its major trading partners were all in the West.

During the 1960s and especially in the 1970s, Washington relied on Teheran to act as its "policeman" in the Gulf, and much to Iran's satisfaction, conservative Arab Gulf states acquiesced to the shah's dictate. Washington's military support to Iran, however, persuaded the Iraqis to sign a renewable friendship treaty with Moscow on April 9, 1972. Similarly, Teheran's added military strength led Riyadh to accelerate its own military build-up.

When the shah's regime collapsed and the Soviet Union invaded and occupied Afghanistan in 1979, revolutionary Iran adopted an expansionist policy that brought the United States much closer to the GCC states. To maintain a regional balance, Washington encouraged GCC states to assist Iraq and, at times during the eight-year-long Iran-Iraq war, provided some assistance itself.¹

¹Bruce R. Kuniholm, *The Persian Gulf and United States Policy: A Guide to Issues and References*, Claremont, California: Regina Books, 1984.

This record points to two separate conclusions: (1) Revolutions will progress no matter what, and (2) temporary countermeasures can carry a long-term price for all parties. In this instance, obsession with the Iranian revolution led all parties to adopt policies with short-term gains. It also fueled the appetite of an ambitious regional leader who flexed his muscles at the opportune moment. In part to avoid a similar outcome in a matter of a few years, the choices that exist for the United States and the GCC states are far narrower than is commonly recognized. Military strategists, in particular, must be aware of the politico-military dimensions of developments in the Gulf, since military considerations largely depend on the political progress of regional governments.

In October 1991, Bahrain became the second GCC state to sign a defense accord with the United States. Kuwait, which until 1987 had been adamantly opposed to any type of alliance with a superpower, led the way in forging a new relationship with Washington. Few of the details on the contents of these alliance relationships were released to the public, largely because of political sensitivities on the part of regional actors. Both pacts likely included a formalization of the support role played by Bahrain and Kuwait, not only during the War for Kuwait, but (especially in Bahrain's case) throughout the many years when U.S. naval vessels used their port facilities.²

If the recent past is a gauge for the future, the political-military rapprochement between the GCC states and the United States will continue for the foreseeable future. There are few alternatives for the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies. On the other hand, it would be unwise to assume that the relationship will be free of tensions. As stated above, the conspicuous failure of the Damascus Declaration signatories to implement any form of Gulf security arrangement by the end of 1992 left GCC states' reliance on Washington rather exposed. Although the last Syrian troops left by the end of July 1991, several thousand U.S. servicemen and women remained in the area.

Faced with growing internal dissatisfaction and perhaps entertaining inflated assessments of their own military prowess, GCC governments tried to come up with their own ideas for greater military in-

²Committee on Armed Services, *U.S. Military Forces to Protect 'Re-Flagged' Kuwaiti Oil Tankers*, Washington, D.C.: United States Senate, June 1987.

dependence. These were reported to involve transforming the currently defensively oriented Saudi armed forces into a mobile offensive force, capable of carrying out a Desert Storm style operation without Western assistance. Riyadh attempted to link negotiations over prepositioning of U.S. equipment in the kingdom with pledges from Washington that the United States would indeed assist in the training and arming of such an offensive unit. The Bush Administration, which has made no such commitment as of late 1992, pointed out to the Saudis that such a transformation in their armed forces was neither militarily feasible nor politically desirable. Militarily, Washington preferred to preposition portions of its own equipment to help support a highly mobile and well trained American force, which could be available during a crisis. Such a force could defend the six GCC states, it was posited. Moreover, it remained to be determined whether GCC states could in fact field an equivalent force of their own, even after all current modernization efforts are implemented.

There were equally crucial decisions to make in the political realm. Although Riyadh maintained that prepositioning created a set of internal problems, including the fear of fundamentalist and Arab nationalist backlash, such reactions were minimal during the War for Kuwait. Far from overstating threats from the fundamentalist or resurgent Arab nationalist camps, it behooves decisionmakers to consider the repercussions of potential upheavals on internal instability. The call by fundamentalist petitioners for an end to "non-Muslim" alliances persuaded Saudi Arabia, for example, not to sign a defense "memorandum of understanding" with the United States similar to the one agreed to between Washington and Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar. Riyadh took notice as well of Iran's opposition to ensuring Gulf security by relying on the West in general and the United States in particular.

For Washington, the immediate priority was to solidify its presence in the area without destabilizing the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies. The Bush Administration demonstrated that the United States would indeed defend the GCC states from outside aggression. Washington preferred to have a permanent forward headquarters for the U.S. Central Command, as it believed that such an arrangement would stabilize the entire region until the GCC states could assume the security mantle themselves. Discussions as to where this forward

facility would be placed were continuing in late 1992. It may indeed be diplomatically astute to place it in the UAE, simply to give the federation a greater stake in any future U.S.-GCC relationship. Such an outcome may also alleviate fears that the smaller shaykhdoms have of an increasingly powerful Saudi Arabia. Moreover, Washington developed significant relations with the smaller Gulf shaykhdoms and, in the immediate aftermath of its mammoth assistance to Kuwait, stood to gain enormous political, military, and economic windfalls in all five.

U.S. economic ties with Kuwait, the UAE, and Oman, and to lesser degrees with Bahrain and Qatar, were not unimportant. Prospects for increased U.S. trade with all of the GCC states looked very promising, even if they did not compare with Saudi Arabia's enormous potential. But although economic prospects promised to help cement the U.S.-GCC relationship, two areas of concern remained.

The first of these is future GCC relations with China, Russia, and the newly independent Central Asian states.³ The 1988 Saudi purchase of Chinese CSS-2 missiles demonstrated how such behavior could complicate U.S. diplomacy throughout the world. In the future, conservative Arab Gulf rulers may be tempted to play the "Russia" or "China" cards whenever they become annoyed with the United States or other western powers. Still, looking ahead, it is very difficult to see how Moscow or Beijing could make substantial inroads within the GCC states. Granted that the United States is now too well entrenched for such attempts to register fundamental changes, GCC states intend to pursue trade, arms purchases, and even investment opportunities in the former USSR and China. It is equally clear that by maintaining some relations with Moscow and the emerging Central Asian republics, GCC states, especially Saudi Arabia, intend to play a pivotal role in the area. For Riyadh, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan represented a rare opportunity to influence their political as well as religious developments. Moreover, for Riyadh, as for Teheran, the area offered an insurance policy for regional influence. The competition of Iran with

³A companion study in this project examines the effect of the War for Kuwait as well as the breakup of the USSR on the Persian Gulf region.

Turkey and Saudi Arabia with Iran complicates matters for the U.S.-GCC relationship.

The second focus of concern is arms control. A year and a half after the end of the War for Kuwait, it was amply clear that the procurement of new, technologically advanced, and expensive weapons systems would be a priority for GCC governments. The one lesson everyone learned from the war was that technologically sophisticated weapons worked. Under the circumstances, GCC states embarked on substantial purchases, including some from non-Western sources. It would come as no surprise if China, North Korea, Brazil, and Argentina, among many others, embark on massive sales to the GCC states to earn badly needed hard currency. The result would be a proliferation of conventional and unconventional weapons throughout the region, further fueling existing tensions at a time the U.S. military finds itself increasingly involved in regional security affairs.

More than a year and half after the end of the War for Kuwait, the evolution of the Gulf region is moving in the following directions:

- Baathist Iraq is reestablishing its authority despite a total U.N. embargo and continued internal disturbances;
- Saudi Arabia is pursuing an assertive course in domestic and foreign affairs—including a steady military build-up—to gain control over its destiny;
- The smaller Arab Gulf shaykhdoms remain concerned about both the rise of Pax Saudica and their own vulnerabilities. To meet these challenges, all are exploring alternative policies, ranging from a rapprochement with Iran to signing bilateral military agreements with Western powers;
- The political-military rapprochement between the GCC states and the United States is growing and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

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